

**THE WOMEN'S CORPS :
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WOMEN'S MILITARY SERVICES IN BRITAIN**

by

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My thesis is an account of the 'Women's Corps movement': the efforts to organise women's non-industrial employment, which led to the establishment of women's military services in Britain during the First World War. I survey the background to their introduction both before and during the First World War, and consider the development of pre-war women's organisations in the context of official thinking about defence.

The outbreak of war prompted the formation of numerous women's voluntary organisations, and a number of women worked to extend women's role, but it was the continuing manpower crisis which, in 1916, persuaded defence ministers and others seriously to consider forming corps of women to substitute for men in the Army. The recommendations of both the Manpower Distribution Board and a military report advocating substitution of women in certain jobs, together with the desire of senior War Office staff to gain control over women's voluntary groups working for the Army, combined to secure the formation early in 1917 of the first of the three women's military corps, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. This was followed soon after by the Women's Royal Naval Service and the Women's Royal Air Force, and I review some of the problems which inevitably accompanied this innovation, such as the spreading of rumours of immorality in the corps, and the manner in which a lack of formal status created difficulties for the women in command.

I examine the decision that the Corps should cease to exist after the First World War; the attempts during the 1930s to reorganise a women's corps to work for the armed forces; the formal bestowal of 'military status' upon members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service and Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1941, and, finally, with the Army and Air Force (Women's Services) Act in 1948, the inclusion of women's services in Britain's peacetime defence organisation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACI	Army Council Instruction
ADM	Admiralty
AG	Adjutant General, War Office
AGXI	Women's Section, in AG's department, WO
ATS	Auxiliary Territorial Service (World War II)
AWO	Admiralty Weekly Orders
BT	Board of Trade
BM	British Museum
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
CAB	Cabinet Papers
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
DFS	Deputy Financial Secretary
DO	Department of Organisation, War Office
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
DR1	A Directorate of Recruiting in War Office
DWRAC	Director Women's Royal Army Corps
ECAC	Executive Committee of the Army Council
EMP	Papers on Women's Employment - in IWM
FANY	First Aid Nursing Yeomanry
FL	Fawcett Library
FO	Fleet Orders
FP/BRU	Furse Papers, Bristol University
F6	Finance Department (No. 6) War Office
FM	Financial Member
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HC Deb 5s	House of Commons Debates, 5th Series

HLRO	House of Lords Records Office
IACC	Informal Army Council Committee
IWM	Imperial War Museum
IWM WS	Imperial War Museum, Women's Section
LG/HLOR	Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Record Office
LRC	Liverpool Record Collection
MGP	Master General of Personnel (RAF)
MLAB	Ministry of Labour
ML	Museum of London
MM	Ministry of Munitions (First World War)
MNS	Ministry of National Service (First World War)
NC/BU	Neville Chamberlain Papers, Birmingham University
NSD	National Service Department
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
PP	Parliamentary Papers
PRO	Public Record Office
PUS	Permanent Under Secretary
QMG	Quartermaster-General
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
T	Treasury Papers
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
VD	Venereal Disease
WAAC	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (World War I)
WAAF	Women's Auxiliary Air Force (World War II)
WEC	Women's Emergency Corps (World War I)

WO	War Office
WRAC	Women's Royal Army Corps
WRNS	Women's Royal Naval Service
WSD	Women's Service Detachments
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union
WVF	Women's Volunteer Force
WVR	Women's Volunteer Reserve
WSWCC	Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy Corps

INTRODUCTION

'The final sanction of ritual comes from death. That is why Church and Army alone have that incomparable power to sway our imaginations. And Church and Army are masculine institutions'.¹ Winifred Holtby hated war; she considered 'military values pernicious' and believed the world would be healthier if all military pageants were abolished; yet, as she wrote in 1936, in *Women and a Changing Civilisation*, she could not 'hear a band playing in the street, or see the kilts of a Highland regiment swing to the march of men, or watch a general ride to review his regiment, without a lift of the heart and an instinctive homage of the senses'.² Holtby suggests that in an age of upheaval, military values inevitably come to dominate; as she makes plain, the demands of war service over centuries have tended to exclude women, or at least put them at a disadvantage in their own society. And 'for the most part women accepted the place in society indicated by their disability for war-service - the foundation upon which the entire organisation rested'.³

The Church and the Armed Forces are two national institutions within whose structure women's position continues to be subordinate to men. Women may have extended their responsibilities in the services over the past thirty years, but only within what the military establishment regards as acceptable bounds: it is still inconceivable that the top ranking military officials should be women. The defence of the nation holds a firm place on the agenda of all political parties, and military values and traditions both inform and reflect some of society's most conservative elements: in a sense, the attitude

of the armed forces towards women is a symbol of society's attitude towards women in general. Attitudes are notoriously difficult to chart accurately, yet their intangibility should not prevent us considering their influence on, for example, political or administrative policies. An underlying theme of my thesis, therefore, is the attitudes of the political and military authorities to womanpower in the services; I indicate, wherever possible, how they informed decisions.

The existing literature on the women's military corps provides an inadequate and sometimes inaccurate account of their history: so my first aim is to get the story of the 'Women's Corps movement' right;⁴ to show how the attempts to organise women's employment led to the establishment of the women's military services during the First World War; and to consider what led eventually to the conferring of 'military status' on the women's services during the Second World War, and to a permanent position within the armed forces after it had ended.

Women were employed during the First World War as part of the process of 'Dilution'.⁵ I aim to assess whether the introduction of women into the military services in 1917 and 1918 should be viewed simply as an extension of the policy of 'dilution',⁶ instigated by political and military authorities, or rather, as marking a significant part of women's struggle during the war for a full and dignified role in national affairs. The outbreak of war inspired the formation of numerous voluntary women's organisations, which, it has been observed, 'almost without exception...adopted quasi-military uniform, a chain of command and rank structures, the clear implication

being that they too were soldiers ready and willing to fight a common foe'.⁷ When the war broke out according to Condell and Liddiard, the joint authors of a recently published collection of photographs of women in the First World War,⁸ the course of action for men was relatively simple and straightforward - the state summoned them and organised them - but 'women had no such clear path to follow and no role model except...that offered by the men: the Armed Services'.⁹

Recent historians of women's experience during the First World War have tended to pay most attention to working class women working in industry.¹⁰ The war also provided opportunities for a number of women in the wealthier sections of society to take part in acceptable, useful work for the first time: according to Sallie Heller Hogg, without the war 'the less enterprising and more conventional "ladies of leisure" would not have entered the labour market'.¹¹ Heller Hogg regards this experience as having provided one of the more lasting effects on women of the war, for it accelerated the acceptance of 'advanced' views by both women and men regarding the propriety of gainful employment for women:

The liberalization of [such] views was... one of degree not of kind. What had changed was not the pivotal homemaker-breadwinner distinction between the sexes, but rather, views as to the compatibility of work with being a lady, and to a lesser extent a wife - but still not a mother - than was the case before the war. It was the gaining acceptance of what had been but a minority view in pre-war days which accounted for the greater willingness of 'young ladies' to enter, and of the newly married to remain in, the labour market'.¹²

Throughout their existence during the First World War, all three women's military corps provided new opportunities for women to take up responsible positions: it was constantly maintained that the very nature of the corps demanded that women should be in charge. They

offered women the opportunity to run organisations; whatever the restrictions and limitations on their role, the experience counted for something.

Pat Jalland writes that 'it is wrong to assume that all women are "hidden from history" and that women's history is necessarily the story of the inarticulate...historians have long accepted the significant role of the upper and middle classes in determining the attitudes and values of the Victorian age, and the women of these privileged classes deserve more historical attention'.¹³ She also notes a comment made by Brian Harrison in 1978, that 'the social and political role of upper-class women is an important and unexplored subject'.¹⁴ As a contribution towards redressing the balance, in the main I have concentrated on the experience of the women who assumed, or were placed in, positions of authority in the women's services, rather than on the women who made up the rank and file of all three corps. This is not through lack of interest in the day-to-day experience of the latter: restrictions of both space and time forced me to choose between focusing on what the women did once they had joined the corps (a thesis in itself) or, alternatively, on the corps as institutions, offering a new role and challenge to women in the heartland of the male world. With this in mind, the women in command and the problems they faced assume greater importance. I also examine some of the preoccupations of women and men behind the lines, in particular as they relate to attitudes towards women - such as the rumours which spread about the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps.

The total number of women employed in all three of the women's military corps during World War I was not large in comparison to the number employed, for example, in munitions factories. But the

inclusion of women in military organisations, however small their number and however mundane their role, did have a significance which went beyond the mere extension of employment opportunities. Over the centuries military service has been associated with duties and privileges, to such an extent that its performance came to be viewed as an essential ingredient of citizenship. Lack of a clear definition of citizenship did not prevent certain assumptions being made; and one of those assumptions was that women, who had no recognisable part to play in military institutions, should be excluded from voting. Though the historical relationship of citizenship and military obligation is beyond the scope of this study, the development of the first women's military corps shows how women's role in relation to the armed forces also reflects their position in society at large.

In 1851 Herbert Spencer argued in favour of equal political rights for men and women.¹⁵ By 1904 he had changed his mind:

...as a matter of equity simply, this claim might be valid were the social position of men and women alike in every other respect. But they are not...Just noting that certain privileges which men accord to women constitute a kind of social priority, it will suffice to emphasise the fact that along with their citizenship, men have the obligation of defending the country while women have no such obligation. To give women the same political power as men without joining to it his onerous political duty, would be to give them not equality but supremacy. Only if, while receiving votes, they undertook to furnish the Army and Navy contingents equal to those which men furnish, could they be said to be politically equal.¹⁶

The establishment of the women's military services in Britain during World War 1 showed that when the situation demanded it, women would be included in the defence forces, even if they did not bear arms. Traditional and conventional objections were put aside, and though compulsion for women was not introduced in the First World War, it was in the Second World War. A pragmatic response from the

political and military authorities to the demands of war is, of course, in the tradition of military service: the nature of military obligation is always conditioned by the military requirements of the time.¹⁷

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION [Pages 11 to 16]

1. Winifred Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation* (1936), p. 102.
2. Ibid, p. 103. Holtby continued: 'I am an agnostic, and was reared a Protestant. But I cannot see the priest move through the stately motions of the Mass and hear the bell, the Latin words, the organ music, without an emotional response of awe and reverence'.
3. Ibid, p. 31.
4. Throughout the war there were numerous references to a 'women's corps movement'. Two examples: Sir Henry Chaplin at a meeting in support of the Women's Volunteer Reserve, described the purpose of the gathering as 'to promote a national movement to form a women's corps'. *The Times*, 17 December, 1916. Sir Auckland Geddes, Director of Recruiting in the War Office in 1916 and Minister of National Service in 1917, referred to the 'Women's Corps movement' in a letter he wrote to Sir Weir. *Select Committee Report*, Violet Douglas Pennant, 1919, pp. xlvii - xlviii.
5. See Chapter 3, p. 55, for definition of dilution.
6. The 'Dilution Movement' was described in 1918 by American observers as 'one of the most far-reaching labour developments of the war, alike in the industrial transformation entailed, in the change in the status of women workers, and in its probable after-war consequences'. Irene Osgood Andrews and Margaret Hobbs, *Economic Effects of the War upon Women and Children in Great Britain* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Oxford and New York, 1918), p. 44.
7. Diana Condell and Jean Liddiard, *Working for Victory? Images of Women in the First World War 1914 - 1918* (1987), p. 55.
8. Diana Condell is Curator in the Department of Exhibits and Firearms at the Imperial War Museum; Jean Liddiard worked on the exhibition 'Women at War 1914 - 18'. Ibid.
9. Condell and Liddiard, op. cit., p. 55.
10. For example, Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (1981); M. Kozak, *Women Munition Workers during the First World War, with special reference to Engineering*, unpublished PhD, University of Hull 1976; Deborah Thom, 'The Ideology of Women's Work, 1914 - 1924, with Special Reference to the NFWW and other Trade Unions', unpublished PhD, CNAA at Thames Polytechnic, 1982; Deborah Thom, 'Women Munition Workers at Woolwich Arsenal in 1914 - 18 War', unpublished MA, University of Warwick, 1975.
11. Sallie Heller Hogg, 'The Employment of Women in Great Britain 1891 - 1921', unpublished D.Phil, Oxford, 1967, p. 525c.

12. Ibid., p. 525e. Heller Hogg also points out that the full impact of a greater willingness to work could not be expected to be evident immediately. Many 'modern' post-war women would no longer have been in a position to give practical expression to their views: some might be too old; some absorbed with family and household, or lacking the training to enable them to take advantage of new opportunities available to women. To trace the full effect of the war, she considers it would be necessary to extend the study to include another generation, as such changed views of the kind she describes would have to be given time to be incorporated into the upbringing of girls, or to be reflected in the educational system, before they would affect behaviour substantially.
13. Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860 - 1914* (Oxford 1986), pp. 1 - 2.
14. Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres. The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (1978), p. 181, quoted in Jalland, op. cit., p. 2.
15. Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics; or, The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified, and the First of them Developed*, first published 1850, (New York, 1870 edition), Chapter XVI, 'The Rights of Women', p. 173.
16. Herbert Spencer, *An Autobiography Vol I*, (1904) pp. 362 - 63.
17. The duty of a subject to perform military service was made a matter of compulsion by the Military Services Acts of 1916, and refusal to do so was allowed, on occasion, only on grounds of conscience. The legality of introducing such an Act was considered by Lord Haldane in the House of Lords, on 8 January 1915, when he stated 'By the Common Law of this country it is the duty of every subject of the Realm to assist the Sovereign in repelling the invasion of its shores and in defence of the Realm. That is a duty which rests on no Statute, but is inherent in the Constitution of the country. It has been laid down... that any subject at a time of emergency may be asked to give himself and his property for the defence of the nation. Therefore compulsory services is not foreign to the Constitution of this country. Given a great national emergency I think it is your duty to resort to it'. Quoted in *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George Vol I* (1938), pp. 429 - 30. Lloyd claimed that the statement was of importance partly for its value as a summary of the Common Law position with regard to compulsory national service.

CHAPTER 1

THE BACKGROUND

'In war the ultimate problem is man-power... It is not necessarily the strongest nation that wins, but the one that has made the best use of its strength'.

David Lloyd George¹

The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps of the British Army, set up in 1917, was one of a number of innovations introduced by concerned civilian and military authorities in Britain to help solve the persistent problem of providing sufficient manpower for the Army. The story of its formation is complex: a tangle of schemes, conflicting interests, power struggles, lack of communication between government departments, rivalry among women - all before the Corps was even established. The *Daily Express*, expounding on the theme of 'The Woman as Soldier', shortly before the official announcement of the formation of the WAAC, proclaimed that

[The War had] brought into being many different aspects of women as worker, organiser, and general helper, but the greatest innovation of all is the woman soldier, recognised by the military authorities, uniformed, living in camps beside the men, under the same conditions as to food and lodging, and working day in, day out, under a strict discipline... There is not the smallest doubt that, had it been suggested that women should undertake work of this kind during the first months of the war, there would have been a great outcry, and the busybodies would have shaken their wise heads and said it was asking the impossible...²

*

Before August 1914 neither military nor civilian authorities in Britain had given serious thought to the question of how women might best be organised in the event of war. If the Army had ever considered women collectively, it saw them in one of three ways: as

nurses, as potential carriers of venereal disease (therefore a threat to Army organisation and manpower) or as wives of soldiers - that is, women 'on the married strength'.³ None of these categories suggested a positive relationship between women and the military establishment. The last two especially encouraged the view that women were at best a nuisance, at worst a serious threat.⁴

The close association of soldiers' wives with the Army (especially those on the 'married strength' of the rank and file) has been represented as the true root of women's service, and those women have been described as the fore-runners of the official women's corps. In her memoir Dame Helen Gwynne Vaughan, first Commandant of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in France in 1917, looked back to the Peninsular War of 1808 - 1814, when women on the married strength accompanying Wellington's troops did the washing or other domestic services for their units, nursed the sick, or allotted billets, and she describes this as part of the 'earlier developments which made the experiment [of the formation of the WAAC] possible'.⁵ More recently, Barton Hacker has depicted women as a normal and vital part of European Armies from the 14th century or even earlier, until the 19th century.⁶ The large number of non-combatant camp followers who lived with the armies included many women: soldiers' wives, widows, sweethearts and others, who worked as sutlers, selling meat and drink to supplement the meagre rations of soldiers, or performed such services as cleaning, cooking, sewing, washing and nursing. The number of women decreased as military support services were brought increasingly under direct military control, until by the latter part

of the 19th century the women had more or less vanished from the scene.

In the British Army, at least, the decrease in the number of women was not entirely due to the fact that the services they performed were taken over by the military. Before 1650 military officials did not concern themselves much with the marital status of their men, but from the latter half of the 17th century, through a belief that men might be distracted from their duties by wives and children, married men were increasingly denied places, and soldiers had to seek permission to marry. By the beginning of the 18th century in the English Army just six wives per hundred men or company were allowed.⁷ As restrictions were imposed, so armies began to accept more responsibility for a soldier's dependents, which in turn altered the relationship between women and armies. Women were regarded as expensive and distracting instead of useful, even essential, suppliers of both services and goods. In the mid-19th century a parliamentary committee judged British Army wives as a 'great evil and difficulty'; the *Naval and Military Gazette* described them as 'a serious impediment to the public service'.⁸ In 1881 the Surveyor General of Ordnance complained that

The presence of women and children was prejudicial to efficiency and to quick movement, and entailed great cost on the country... It is evident that the presence of women and children with a body of men intended for quick movements for service in distant colonies, and for occasional fighting, is in the last degree inconvenient.⁹

Such views led directly to the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s, which Hacker regards as a symbol of the final decline of women's role in the old style army: 'The Army equated camp follower with prostitute; in the name of controlling venereal disease and

guarding the men's health, army and navy women, save the handful who remained on the strength, lost what legitimacy they had left'.¹⁰

Even the role of nurse, performed for years by the women who travelled with armies, became unavailable. Soldiers' wives had long been expected to care for the sick and wounded: when Parliament had authorised the establishment of military hospitals in 1652, it had considered that nurses should be female, and preferably widows of soldiers.¹¹ The advent of Florence Nightingale and her followers from the higher ranks of society removed the opportunity for wives and widows in this domain. Florence Nightingale allowed Army wives to do the hospital laundry but she considered them unfit through lack of skill and training, to care for wounded men.¹²

An endeavour to reform the system of marriage restriction in the British Army establishment led to an enquiry in 1912 by Mrs May Tennant, whose report was considered by the Army Council in 1914, shortly before war broke out.¹³ The Report recommended an increase in the married establishment and suggested that Army Labour Exchanges for women should be set up as one of a number of measures to help poverty-stricken Army families,¹⁴ but the war prevented the implementation of the recommendations.

Hacker describes the women who lived with and worked for the early armies as having fulfilled 'important military roles for centuries'.¹⁵ The women who cooked and sewed, washed and nursed, provided goods and comfort for their men were certainly performing crucial tasks but their role was not a military but a domestic one.¹⁶ Military historians have been criticised for ignoring the contribution to Army life made by women in pre-19th century armies;¹⁷ but

conventional military history precludes the interests of non-combatant participants.¹⁸ When women joined the women's military corps during the First World War they became part of the military establishment in their own right rather than because they had a relationship with a man.¹⁹ The formation of the women's corps was a response to provide for the military needs of the moment. Additionally, it offered an opportunity for women to perform again many of the tasks they had carried out on a casual basis in earlier times, but this time formally, and under stricter control of the defence institutions into which they were recruited.

*

Had the political or military authorities considered whether women could play a role (other than nursing) in the military activities of the nation before the First World War, it would only have been possible within the context of Home Defence policy as it developed in this period. The spectre of invasion (and concomitant concern for home defence) was raised at various times in the years immediately before the war, stimulated by the popular press and books and plays on the subject.²⁰ Not that this was a new phenomenon: as contemporaries noted, the fear of invasions 'was a deeply rooted tradition'²¹ in Great Britain; and though it was true that the country had not been seriously invaded since the days of William the Conqueror, A.J. Balfour pointed out, 'it is equally certain that the practicability of the enterprise has been commonly assumed on the continent, and that it has never been doubted by general opinion in this country'.²² A widespread fear of invasion remained a constant

feature, though during the Edwardian period the enemy changed, from Russia and/or France, to Germany.

Before the war the main forum for the discussion of military strategy generally, including that of Home Defence, was the Committee of Imperial Defence.²³ An examination of Committee of Imperial Defence minutes and papers relating to the likelihood of invasion or preparations for Home Defence, from December 1902 until the last meeting of the Committee before war broke out, held on 14 July 1914, reveals that despite its wide-ranging interests there was no suggestion that women might usefully perform some role within home defence arrangements: not only did no women participate in discussions at CID meetings, but they were also completely ignored even as a subject of discussion.

Debate about how Britain might best cope with problems of defence was not confined to the official arena of the CID. The National Service League, founded in February 1902, provided a rallying point for those both within and outside government circles, who felt uneasy about national defence, and in the years before the First World War it led a movement that called for the introduction of compulsory conscription as a basis for Britain's military system.²⁴ Yet even within this organisation, with its underlying desire to promote 'national efficiency'²⁵ at every level, the role assigned to women remained firmly 'within the limits imposed by convention'.²⁶ The League journal carried appeals to encourage women to join because of the desirable effect that being a League member would have on their men folk: making them better sons, husbands, brothers, fathers 'by having given some small part of their manhood to the service of their

country'. The response by women was apparently 'considerable, notably amongst those who were obliged to pass their time in refined idleness', but their function was to be 'hospitable, secretarial and decorative'. They had their own executive and committees at national level, but they could not address public meetings, or chair branches, and they certainly 'could not be expected to serve their country in arms'.

The Territorial and Reserves Force, set up in 1907 by Richard Haldane, Liberal Secretary of State for War, was designed to defend Britain against invasion. There were, as in the regular army, many non-combatant jobs available for Territorial Force volunteers. Haldane's vision was of 'a nation truly in arms',²⁷ with a military structure supported at local level by associations promoting training and drill, at schools, in cadet corps and rifle clubs. But except as nurses women had no part to play in Haldane's nation; he did not consider including them in the new force.²⁸ An opportunity for women to help prepare for their country's defence came only in 1909, with the establishment of Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs). These were to be a technical reserve of the Territorial Force Medical Service, for mobilisation in case of invasion, and they were intended for home defence, to provide voluntary aid to the sick and wounded.²⁹ The nature of this work ensured that, like nurses, those who joined a VAD were protected under the terms of the 1906 Geneva Convention, which formally defined and protected the status in war of those who cared for the sick and wounded.³⁰

A few other organisations set up in the first decade of the 20th century offered women a chance of voluntary work. In 1907 the First

Aid Nursing Yeomanry - FANY - was founded, with the aim of training its members as nurses on horseback to ride out from field hospitals to the battlefield.³¹ The Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy Corps (WSWCC), founded by Mrs Mabel St Clair Stobart in 1907, also trained women to provide service in wartime.³² Mrs Stobart founded her organisation in order that women might demonstrate their capability of taking a real share in National Defence.³³ On returning to England from the Transvaal in 1907, she discovered that everyone was talking about two great dangers supposedly threatening England: the invasion of England by Germany, and the possibility that parliamentary franchise might be granted to women. She believed that the juxtaposition of these two problems offered women the perfect opportunity: what better way of demonstrating women's capacity to share the government of the country than by showing what they could contribute to the National Defence? The WSWCC was officially accepted as a VAD in 1910, and registered with the British Red Cross Service (BRCS) at the War Office. When the Balkan War broke out in 1912 Mrs Stobart saw her chance for action and eventually took out a group to Bulgaria. A year later she wrote a book recording her Balkan War experience, in the hope that through publicity she might force the authorities to take women into the Territorial Services, rather than 'play with' them, as she felt they did in the VAD scheme.³⁴

These individual efforts to organise women to play a part in the defense of the nation were of interest only to a minority, however. In the first years of their existence, when the threat of war was less apparent, those who joined the VADs were often ridiculed, and the whole scheme was frequently regarded as a 'fashionable fad'.³⁵ The

activities of the suffrage societies, especially the militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU),³⁶ drew far more public attention than the small groups of women who marched to camp in Swanage, dressed in 'a very service-like blue-grey uniform' carrying 'haversacks and water-bottles'.³⁷ When war broke out the only military sphere in which women were accepted was their traditional role of caring for the sick and wounded.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 1 [Pages 19 to 27]

1. *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, Vol. III* (1934), p. 1350.
2. *Daily Express*, 21 February 1917, p. 4.
3. The number of men allowed to join the Married Establishment of the army was limited, and those to whom permission was granted were referred to as being on the 'married strength'.
4. For further reading, see: Army Nursing: Anne Summers, *Angels and Citizens: British Women as Military Nurses 1854 - 1914* (1988); Stella Bingham, *Ministering Angels* (1979); Cecil Woodham Smith, *Florence Nightingale* (1950).
V.D. campaign: Glen Petrie, *A Singular Iniquity - the Campaigns of Josephine Butler* (1971); Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: women, class and the state* (1980).
 Imperial War Conferences 1917 and 1918: 'Temptations of Oversea Soldiers in London', Minutes of Proceedings 24 April and 27 April 1917 (PRO CAB 32/1); 'Temptations of Oversea Troops', 19 July 1918, *ibid.*
Women 'On the Strength': Army Council reports about the married establishment of the Army, e.g. Army Council Precis No. 574, 'Married Establishments of the Army', 1912 (PRO WO163/17); 'Marriage off the Strength', Report by Mrs May Tennant, Appendix to Army Council Precis No. 811, PRO WO163/20. Myna Trustram, *Women of the Regiment. Marriage and the Victorian Army* (1984); Eileen Bigland, *Britain's Other Army* (1946); Terence O'Brien, 'A Woman of the Regiment', *History Today XXV* (1975); Byron Farwell, *For Queen and Country, A Social History of the Victorian Army* (1981), pp. 224 - 38.
5. Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army* (1942), p. 9. See Appendix VII for biographical notes on H. Gwynne Vaughan.
6. Barton C. Hacker, 'Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe', *Signs*, 6 (1981), pp. 643 - 71.
7. Hacker, *ibid.*, p. 659.
8. Quoted in Hacker, *ibid.*, p. 659.
9. Army Council Precis No. 574 (1912) 'Married Establishments of the Army', PRO WO163/17.
10. Hacker, *op cit.*, p. 670.
11. Quoted in Hacker, *ibid.*, p. 662.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 668. See Anne Summers for a useful account of British women as military nurses between 1854 - 1914. According to Summers, 'The British military nurse was both a real and an imaginary woman in the Victorian period. Very few female nurses

were in fact employed by the army. Military nursing was a predominantly male occupation'. Anne Summers, op. cit., p. 1.

13. 22 May 1914, 167th Meeting Army Council. Item 2 'Marriage off the Strength'; Report by Mrs Tennant, Appendix to Army Council Precis 811, PRO WO163/20. For biographical notes on Mrs Tennant, see Appendix VII.
14. The measure was regarded as a social service for army families, not as a step toward a married women's military corps.
15. Hacker, op cit., p. 645.
16. Hacker comments that 'the most striking fact about women's activities in the army is how little they differed from the ordinary run of women's work outside it'. Ibid., p. 653.
17. Ibid, p. 645.
18. John Keegan lists five different categories of military history; the study of generals/generalships; the study of weapons and weapon systems; naval history; study of institutions and regiments, armies and navies and the strategic doctrine by which they fought; and battle or campaign history, which Keegan considers deserves 'primacy over all other branches of military historiography'. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle. A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (1983 edition), pp. 25 - 35.
19. Always excepting nurses.
20. For example, Erskine Childers, *Riddle of the Sands* (1903, Penguin 1978); Guy du Maurier, *An Englishman's Home* (1909).
21. See 'The Feasibility of Oversea Invasion' (unsigned) translated from German for the June number of *Marine-Rundschau* (1902) and printed for Committee of Imperial Defence, April 1903, PRO CAB 3/1, 12A.
22. A.J. Balfour (1848 - 1930), Prime Minister July 1902 - December 1905; 'Draft Report on possibility of Serious invasion', 11 November 1903, reprinted for CID January 1913, PRO CAB 3/2, 18A.
23. The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) was set up by Balfour in December 1902; when provoked by the recognition of a need for better planning and co-ordination of Britain's defence forces, he remodelled the old Defence Committee of the Cabinet which had been formed in 1895. Although it held advisory rather than executive functions the CID was an extremely influential body, regarded by some contemporaries as having played a crucial role in the defensive preparations of the nation. See CID Minutes, PRO CAB 2/1, 2/2; also Sydney H. Zebel, *Balfour* (1973), pp. 114 - 7.
24. The movement made 'national service' its rallying cry, in the hope that it would prove more acceptable than a call for compulsory conscription. Michael J. Allison, *The National*

Service Issue, 1899 - 1914, unpublished PhD, King's College, University of London (1975).

25. 'National Efficiency', a popular political slogan at the beginning of the 20th century in Britain, was a useful tag given to a collection of ideas and principles which some people regarded as the solution to help Britain solve the problem of her decline from a position as a great power. National Efficiency was a 'diagnosis of what had gone wrong with Britain, and a rough description of the direction reform must take if the country was to escape future disaster'. G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency, A Study of British Politics and Political Thought, 1899 - 1914*, (Oxford 1971), p. 1. Richard Haldane played a leading part in the attempt to implement a programme of 'Efficiency'.
26. This, and the following quotations, are from Allison, op cit., pp. 136 - 7.
27. Quoted in Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society 1815 - 1914* (1980), p. 275.
28. In 1908 the Territorial Force Nursing Service was set up as part of the Territorial Force Medical Service, and the nurses who joined it were constantly addressed in 'nation-in-arms' terms, with the added gloss that through their professional expertise they were uniquely privileged (i.e. unlike other women) to join in the male military enterprise. I owe this information to Anne Summers (Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, 21 November 1987, correspondence with author).
29. The VAD scheme was devised by Sir Alfred Keogh, Director General of Army Medical Services at the War Office. Document (unsigned, undated) IWM WS BRC 10'1/6; Paper on VAD organisation by Dame Katharine Furse, Commandant of VADs until November 1917, in 'Woman Power in U.K. Policy File', 10 January 1917, PRO NATS 1/76; Thekla Bowser, *The Story of British VAD Work in the Great War* (1917); Stella Bingham, op cit., pp. 125 - 46.
30. See Appendix II, 'The Red Cross, and Geneva Conventions'. The 1906 Geneva Convention stated explicitly that protection was to be given to medical personnel at all times. The Convention recognised the cooperation of voluntary aid societies, thus providing protection for the women who later worked in organisations such as VADs, and Red Cross Corps during the First World War. Most women working for the war effort fitted into this category until the formation of the women's military corps. The status of women's corps in the laws of war remained essentially undefined throughout the First World War; it was a matter of inconclusive debate among military authorities.
31. Hugh Popham, *F.A.N.Y. The Story of the Women's Transport Service, 1907 - 1984* (1984); Elizabeth Ewing, *Women in Uniform through the Centuries* (1975) pp. 81 - 4.

32. Mrs St Clair Stobart, *War and Women - From Experience in the Balkans and Elsewhere* (1913); Monica Krippner, *The Quality of Mercy - Women at War, Serbia 1915 - 1918* (1980), pp. 19 - 22; David Mitchell, *Women on the Warpath, The Story of the Women of the First World War* (1966), pp. 150 - 60.
33. Mrs St Clair Stobart, *War and Women*, op cit., 'Proem'.
34. Mrs St Clair Stobart, *ibid.*, p. xiii. By 1913 Mrs St Clair Stobart had resigned from her Corps, and from the County of London branch of the Red Cross. Anne Summers, correspondence with author, op. cit.
35. Katharine Furse, *typescript*, 'War Work and its Lessons' 20 September 1919, FP/BRU 196/9/A1.
36. The two best known women's groups in existence at the outbreak of the First World War were the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), headed by Mrs Millicent Fawcett, and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), run by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel. See Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women. Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907 - 14* (1987).
37. *Red Cross and Ambulance News*, 1910, describing the Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy Corps, quoted in Mitchell, *Women on the Warpath*, op cit., p. 152.

CHAPTER 2

OUTBREAK OF WAR

I. Women's Response

At 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 4 August, 1914, Great Britain formally declared war against Germany. The response of thousands of women mirrored that of thousands of men: according to reports in the press, military preparations were accompanied by scenes of remarkable enthusiasm.¹ Voluntary societies seemed to spring up over night and newspapers were filled with requests for women to help in different ways. Hundreds of women enthusiastically volunteered to care for the sick and wounded. The head of a local hospital which had asked for a few volunteer nurses was reported as saying, 'If Kitchener had asked for half a million women, he would have been oversubscribed by first post'.²

A majority of the members of the prewar suffrage societies, the NUWSS, headed by Mrs Millicent Fawcett, and the WSPU, run by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, suspended political work and turned their attention to the war effort.³ The WSPU has been criticised for its abrupt change of attitude toward a government it had opposed fiercely.⁴ A member of the WSPU, Stella Newsome, recalled her own and others enraged reaction to the complete closing down of suffrage activities during the war.⁵ Christabel Pankhurst believed that a supportive response would actively assist the women's cause, and in a speech at Carnegie Hall, New York, in October 1914, declared that women's achievements in the war would force politicians to give way and enfranchise women:

Do you suppose that it is going to be so easy when this war is over to refuse to acknowledge the rights and duties of British women where the work of fulfilling national and Empire responsibility is concerned? We do not believe that we shall remain disfranchised at the end of the War; and let me add ...that if they try to keep us still disfranchised we shall resume the fight that we were making when the war began.⁶

Her answer to those who questioned why suffragettes were fighting for the Government they had opposed for so long was that they were fighting for their country, themselves and for future generations.⁷

A few days before war broke out a manifesto signed by Millicent Fawcett in her capacity as Vice President to the International Woman Suffrage Alliance was presented to the Foreign Office and foreign embassies in London, pleading for governments to take action to avert the 'unparalleled disaster' that threatened Europe.⁸ Pursuing the deep-felt desire to avoid conflict, a Peace Rally was arranged by various women's organisations, to take place on 4 August at Kingsway Hall.⁹ But in addition to carrying resolutions calling upon governments to support efforts to restore peace, a resolution was passed which encouraged women's societies 'to use their organisations to help those suffering from economic and industrial dislocations of war'.¹⁰ The tenor of this meeting at Kingsway Hall has been described as a 'will to relieve distress' but no will at all to wage war.¹¹ Undertaking relief work without actively supporting the war effort allowed people to come to terms with ambivalent attitudes towards war. Members of the NUWSS were asked to join an 'Active Service League', and to wear a special uniform.¹² At the end of August Mrs Catherine Harley,¹³ sister of General Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in France, described the NUWSS as being devoted 'exclusively to the relief of distress' and praised the adaptability

and ease with which the NUWSS had transformed itself so quickly from a political body.¹⁴

Rallying to the war effort, of course, was not the prerogative of the established suffrage societies: newspapers were filled with appeals for women to help, in a variety of ways.¹⁵ Specific evidence as to the social or occupational background of the hundreds who responded to such appeals is difficult to trace, but it is likely that the majority of those who could afford to volunteer at this time came from the wealthiest sections of the community.¹⁶

One of the first of the voluntary bodies set up at the beginning of the war was the Women's Emergency Corps (WEC), which began recruiting members just a few days after war was declared.¹⁷ One of its founders was the Hon. Mrs Evelina Haverfield, daughter of the 3rd Lord Abinger, and with something of a reputation as a militant suffragette.¹⁸ During the Boer War she had gone out to South Africa, set up a remount camp, and rescued abandoned cavalry horses: according to Sylvia Pankhurst, she 'habitually wore a hunting-stock and a small black riding hat'.¹⁹ Evelina Haverfield took an active part in suffragette demonstrations: in 1909 she had been arrested for leading police horses out of their ranks, appeared in the dock with Mrs Pankhurst, and was later imprisoned.²⁰ She had also been Treasurer of the Workers' Suffrage Federation (originally known as the East London Federation of Suffragettes).²¹

The aim of the WEC - to provide women as paid, not voluntary helpers - has been described by Condell and Liddiard as 'impeccably feminist'.²² They also maintain that through their involvement with the Women's Volunteer Reserve (WVR) and other similar corps, the war

brought together 'radical suffragette and conservative aristocrat'.²³ Undeniably there were such alliances - the association between Evelina Haverfield and Lady Londonderry, the founder of the Women's Legion, for example.²⁴ But as Haverfield herself was an 'aristocrat', socially at least it was unlikely to have been a particularly awkward association. This is not to deny that the war offered opportunities for exchanges of views among women who otherwise might not have bothered to communicate with each other, and thus spread more widely ideas previously restricted to the active members of suffrage societies. But for many women war work displaced the suffragist fight as the cause which demanded their commitment - as in the case of Evelina Haverfield.²⁵

Applications to register in the Women's Emergency Corps poured in, and within two or three days of its first appeal the organisation was forced to extend its premises.²⁶ Initially, the WEC aimed to 'act as a clearing-house for ascertaining the names and aptitudes of those women who are ready to respond to the urgent call for patriotic duty'.²⁷ Those who applied would be registered for jobs such as cooks and interpreters, or work in childcare, riding, driving and motor repairs. Only those who were adequately trained would be placed in jobs, but the Corps also formed an industrial branch, and set up workshops in London.²⁸

There was a division of opinion within the WEC about the most appropriate direction for women's war work. Early in September the Hon. Evelina Haverfield and other like-minded members announced that they had 'unofficially' organised a new body, the Women's Volunteer Force (WVF), with the aim of protecting women and children and the

sick and old in the event of a German landing.²⁹ Women volunteers were to be drilled and taught to shoot, though the main object of the force was to train them along lines similar to the Boy Scouts. In December 1914 the corps changed its name to the Women's Volunteer Reserve, and took on a new lease of life, with Lady Londonderry appointed as its Colonel-in-Chief, and the Hon. Evelina Haverfield designated Honorary Colonel.³⁰ It proposed to enrol qualified female motorists, motor-cyclists and aviators, and to specialise in signalling, first-aid, cooking, riding and driving. It announced that it would train suitable women to form disciplined bodies who would, in case of invasion or other contingency, be ready to assist the authorities with such matters as transport. Branches were formed at Reading, Walthamstow, Guildford, Worcester and Derby, and Lady French³¹ accepted the position of Honorary Colonel of the Essex and Hertfordshire Battalion.

A meeting held on 16 December at Mansion House in London was presided over by the Lord Mayor and addressed by Sir Henry Chaplin³² and his daughter, Lady Londonderry. Chaplin informed the audience that the purpose of the meeting was to promote a national movement to form a women's corps, whose services could be offered to the state. But he 'emphasised that the purpose of the corps was not the creation of a body of Amazons, capable of fighting side by side with men in the fighting line: rather, the activities of the corps were intended to be employed in the case of invasion - and then only for purposes suited to women'.³³ What they envisaged was an invasion of this country 'by hordes of German barbarians', and for his part Chaplin would feel nothing but gratitude if he knew anyone dear to him in their reach was

armed with a revolver, which in the last extremity they knew how to use. Such sentiments would not have seemed misplaced; hours before, on the morning of Wednesday, 16 December, the Yorkshire coast was attacked by a German cruiser force and Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby were shelled.³⁴

Winifred Holtby was a 16 year old schoolgirl at Queen Margaret's in Scarborough at the time. She described the incident in a letter she wrote to the headgirl of the school, who had been called home by her parents after they had received a warning from the headmistress of the possibility of East Coast raids.³⁵ Winifred was sitting down to breakfast, raising her first spoonful of porridge to her mouth, when the Germans struck: '...the noise was like nothing I had heard before - deafening, clear-cut, not rumbly'.³⁶ The staff led the girls away from the school, while shells burst around them:

I heard the roar of a gun, and the next instant there was a crash, and a thick cloud of black smoke enveloped one of the houses in Seamer Road...it was all so like a bad dream...We crossed the line into the Seamer Valley. Along the road was a stream of refugees; there was every kind of vehicle, filled to overflowing with women and children; yes, and men too. I saw one great brute, young and strong, mounted on a cart horse, striking it with a heavy whip, tearing at full gallop down the road, caring nothing for the women and children who scrambled piteously out of his path, with the fear of death on his craven face. I could have killed him with pleasure.³⁷

In the words of *The Daily Mail*, 'for the first time in two centuries British towns were shelled by a foreign foe and British blood spilt on British soil'.³⁸ The toll was not heavy - about fourteen people lost their lives and another two hundred were injured - but the incident was significant:

Coming thus, without any warning, it was impossible to realise that the incredible had really happened, that German warships

were within range of the English coast and were raking an undefended seaside town with shell.³⁹

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Women's voluntary support for the war effort was widely approved, but not the idea that women might take up roles other than those of nurses or fundraisers, knitters or canteen organisers.⁴⁰ Resistance was rooted in conventional attitudes to women's roles and was expressed most vehemently by those who also opposed women's suffrage. The 'physical force' argument was fashionable with anti-suffragists in the years before the First World War. It was based on the assumption that in the last resort all government rests upon physical force, and thus political power must rest with men, the physically stronger sex. *The Anti-Suffrage Review* was packed with examples of such sentiments: 'Man votes, then, first as a male being and potential defender of person and property...'⁴¹; '...we still have to maintain that the full power of citizenship cannot be given to a sex which is by nature debarred from fulfilling some of the crucial duties of citizenship - enforcement of law, of treaties, and of national rights, national defence, and all the rougher work of Empire'.⁴² It was a circular argument: women could not have the vote because they could not fight; they could not fight because they were women. Suffrage supporters attacked this prejudice,⁴³ but even they did not necessarily see a place for women within the military services. A handbook put out by The Men's League (an organisation of men who favoured women's suffrage) rejected the 'Physical Force' argument, insisting that the most important question was whether Britain would actually lose in military strength if women had the vote; it claimed this would not be the case. Describing as nonsense

the argument that women should not take a share in decisions to send men to the battlefield because they were not fighters themselves, the author nevertheless concluded that it was probably 'not desirable that women should enter the Army and the Navy; they might not add to the usefulness of the forces; it would certainly remove them from their natural sphere'.⁴⁴

The idea of women performing military service, with the implication that eventually they might be required to take part in a battle, was both disturbing and offensive to many people for a variety of reasons. Some simply believed that fighting was a man's job and should remain so. Others feared that women could not cope with the reality of war at the front. Some asked, if women go off to fight and are killed in the same numbers as men, who will rebuild (repeople) society afterwards? And if men are not fighting for women and children at home, for whom are they fighting? During the First World War people, especially women, worried about the moral consequences of allowing women to become part of the military forces and live in close proximity to men. Finally, considerable disapproval was expressed during the war of women seen to be 'apeing' men.⁴⁵ The Marchioness of Londonderry, invited to become Colonel-in-Chief of the Women's Voluntary Reserve, had accepted, despite her dislike of the military-sounding title, which she thought 'a mistake and misleading', because she was excited by the enthusiasm of many of the women involved, and she had ambitions to alter the direction of the organisation. At the Mansion House meeting in December 1914, like her father, she reassured the audience that they had no plans to create 'a militant force of

warlike Amazons';⁴⁶ rather, their object was to organise the women of the country to take the place of men called for active service.

According to Lady Londonderry, at the end of 1914 people were still so opposed to the concept of women working outside their accepted spheres of nursing, sewing or cooking, that immediately after the Mansion House meeting insulting letters which complained of women 'masquerading' or 'apeing' men began to appear in the papers. Lady Londonderry disapproved of this development, but admitted that some of the women in the Reserve provoked such a response: 'We had to contend with a Section of "She-Men" who wished to be armed to the teeth and who would have looked quite absurd had they had their way'.⁴⁷ She claimed that, as reports of these 'male-females' spread, she took to task some of 'these martial spirits of the Women's Volunteer Reserve'. She recognized that 'their intentions were of the best - it was a hard and cruel fate that had created them women', but she was convinced that if the movement was to grow the WVR would have to be organised on a less military basis.

Many people were highly suspicious of the militaristic tendencies they claimed to observe among some sections of the female population. Typical of their disapproval at this time was a letter sent to the Editor of *The Morning Post* which asked if there were 'not some regulation forbidding that the King's Uniform be worn in such a manner as to bring it into contempt'? Two days earlier the writer had watched a show that included four women dressed in khaki shirts, ties and tunics:

...These women wore short skirts it is true, as a concession to their sex; they had either cropped their hair or had managed so to hide it under their khaki felt hats that at first sight the younger women looked exactly like men. It is well known that clothes exercise an enormous influence on the mind, and that

women will be dignified or frivolous, sporting or artistic, according to the type of clothes they wear...I noticed that these women assumed mannish attitudes, stood with legs apart while they smote their riding whips, and looked like self-conscious and not very attractive boys.

Near these ridiculous 'poseuses' stood the real thing - a British Officer in mufti. He had lost his left arm and right leg...surely if these women had a spark of shame left they should have blushed to be seen wearing a parody of the uniform which this officer and thousands like him, have made a symbol of honour and glory by their deeds. I do not know the corps to which these ladies belong, but if they cannot become nurses or ward maids in hospital, let them put on sunbonnets and print frocks and go and make hay or pick fruit or make jam, or do the thousand and one things that women can do to help. But, for heaven's sake, don't let them ride and march about the country making themselves and, what is more important, the King's uniform, ridiculous.

Signed - 'A Woman'⁴⁹

This letter sparked off a correspondence that continued for days. 'Another Woman' attacked the 'ridiculous masquerades of women in khaki' which were 'an unhappy by-product of the War', and asked 'What are we to think of the taste, let alone the humour, of the self-appointed "colonels" and "captains" who are capable of such a display at so grave and terrible a time?'⁴⁹ Lady Isobel Margesson defended the maligned women and praised the practice of wearing uniform, which the war had showed was so useful 'in stimulating true patriotism'.⁵⁰ Uniform was increasingly seen as a visible sign of service and efficiency; in the north of France women were not allowed to do war relief work unless they wore a uniform. Margesson asked 'Is nursing to be the women's only expression of patriotism and the nurses' uniform the only one of value?' The originator of the correspondence wrote in again, pointing out that what she objected to was not women wearing nurses' uniform but women wearing soldiers' uniform. Women 'never can be soldiers, and all the drill and marching in the world will never make soldiers of them. Therefore I consider that military

training is entirely unsuited to the female sex and a sheer waste of time, and that uniform only makes them ridiculous'.⁵¹

Violet Markham,⁵² a strong supporter of the anti-suffrage movement until 1912, who played a prominent part in discussions about women's work during the war, joined the debate to explain what she believed was the point of the objection to the use of khaki by women. Drill and discipline were always useful, and no-one minded the use of a distinctive uniform or dress by women enrolled for various services. But the use of khaki and the adoption of military titles by the leaders of these movements struck 'a wrong and jarring note'. Services in connection with hospitals and canteen work were useful, of course, 'but hardly give women a claim to assume the uniforms and titles of men who have fallen on the blood-stained field of Flanders or in the trenches at Gallipoli. These things have become the symbols of death and sacrifice. They should not be parodied by feminine guards of honour at concerts or entertainments...The use of Khaki by women is primarily a question of taste'.⁵³

If letters to newspapers reflect popular prejudices, then hostility towards women's militaristic enthusiasm decreased in the last two years of the war - or, at least, such sentiments were not so freely expressed.⁵⁴ Yet there remained throughout the war a conflict between those who believed that even though women might do useful war work, they should eschew a 'military' image, and those who believed, for a variety of reasons, that women's corps should be modelled closely on their male equivalents. Disapproval of displays of 'masculinity' or 'militarism' by women is most readily explained within the context of the prewar struggle for women's suffrage.

Despite what was viewed as evidence of a new rationality among suffrage supporters, exhibited since the outbreak of war, masculine behaviour by women remained unsettling. During the war it was complicated by the fact that even women who could in no sense be described as militant suffragists displayed a frightening determination to 'ape' men. They were not demanding the vote; they simply wished to participate fully in the war. But such behaviour could only stimulate the old anti-suffrage prejudices.

Anti-suffragists had often accused the militant suffragettes of masculine behaviour, and such accusations were meant as whole-hearted condemnation. But, confusingly, 'masculine' as applied to women's behaviour was not always a term of abuse, especially during the war, when it was often considered the highest praise to say of a woman that she had 'behaved like a man'. Whether applauded or decried, expressions of masculinity in women were undoubtedly regarded as a challenge to the status quo: masculine women were seen as both a threat to and a criticism of other women's femininity and personal security; and such women clearly challenged the political, social and economic preeminence of men.

There was another, less tangible, aspect of the hostility to militarism in women. During the First World War people either consciously or unconsciously saw connections between displays of militarism on the one hand and masculine women, feminism, and lesbianism on the other. The feminism/lesbianism equation had been set out by Edward Carpenter, who claimed that many women who became feminists were not normal: their maternal instincts were weak; they were mannish in temperament; they did not represent their sex.⁵⁵ This

association of lesbianism with feminism (and with masculinity and militarism in women) must have affected both relationships between women, and the public view of such relationships. Lillian Faderman comments that 'openly expressed love between women for the most part ceased to be possible after World War I. Woman's changed status and the new medical knowledge cast such affection in a new light'.⁵⁶ Women who displayed symptoms of lesbianism (an inclination to dress up in masculine clothes, to drill and to shoot were seen as overt symptoms) were considered not only distasteful, but abnormal, in need of medical help. Any attack on them was thus fully justified. Women in military organisations were a target for those who held these views,⁵⁷ and it was not uncommon during the First World War for women who joined the military services to be regarded as peculiar, if not downright immoral.

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In May 1915, under pressure from Lloyd George and Bonar Law, Asquith agreed to form a Coalition Government with the Unionists, and a solitary Labour representative, Arthur Henderson, joined the Coalition Cabinet. The new Coalition Government was announced on 26 May 1915, to the accompaniment of expressions of hope that it would promote a more efficient conduct of the war. With the advent of the new Government Mrs Pankhurst continued to press for the full participation of women in the war.⁵⁸ The culmination of her efforts was a widely publicised procession of women who marched to see Lloyd George, the new Minister of Munitions, demanding the right to serve the war effort fully. According to Christabel Pankhurst, the procession was Lloyd George's idea. Soon after his appointment as

Minister of Munitions he sent a message to Mrs Pankhurst saying he wished to see her about 'the national danger'.⁵⁷ Eventually she agreed to meet him, whereupon Lloyd George asked if she and her organisation would help him to overcome the strong opposition to the employment of women in munition factories, by organising a huge demonstration to testify to women's willingness to make munitions. Mrs Pankhurst had agreed reluctantly, and only on the condition that the government paid the expenses of organising the procession.

The great March took place on Saturday 17 July. Between 20,000 and 50,000 women joined the procession, which ended in a deputation of women being received by Lloyd George.⁵⁸ It was described by one newspaper as 'a momentuous occasion...the first time in history that the womanhood of England - or any other country - had made so spontaneous and overwhelming a manifestation of its dauntless and undivided spirit'.⁵⁹

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II. Women's Legion

At a meeting held at Londonderry House, home of Lady Londonderry, a few days after the women's procession - and perhaps inspired by its spirit - it was decided to form a new organisation, the Women's Legion.⁶² This would comprise different sections including agriculture and cookery, and it was intended that the WVR, with its several thousand members, would be incorporated.⁶³ The Women's Legion proposed to replace 'working men by working women': voluntary workers would only be used as organisers, or in committee and propaganda work. Its objects were: 'To provide a capable and efficient body of women whose services can be offered to the State as

may be required to take the place of men; to train and provide disabled sailors and soldiers with useful and permanent employment; to organise such industries as may be useful to the State'.⁶⁴

The two best known sections of the Women's Legion, both of which were attached to the Army, were the Military Cookery Section and the Motor Transport Section. The new organisation, headed by Lady Londonderry, approached Sir John Cowans, the Quartermaster-General at the War Office, and suggested it would be willing to provide cooks to replace men in certain areas of the Army. Cowans accepted the offer, and agreed that initially they should provide cooks for convalescent hospitals at Dartford, Eastbourne and Epsom, who would be paid £20 a year and given free rations and accommodation. Under special authority granted on 3 August 1915, the Cookery Section of the Women's Legion became the first corps of women to be officially employed with the Army during the First World War,⁶⁵ and the first group, of twenty women cooks, were sent to Dartford Convalescent Hospital. The experiment was a success: the scheme expanded and subsequently came under Army Council Instruction (ACI) of 26 February 1916.⁶⁶ The first Commandant of the Women's Legion Military Cookery Section was Miss Lilian Barker - 'the most efficient, most inspired female superintendent of female labour' - whose father ran a tobacconist's shop and who had been a florist's apprentice before she became a teacher.⁶⁷ After a few months Miss Barker was appointed Lady Superintendent of Women in the Ordnance Factories at the Royal Arsenal Woolwich,⁶⁸ and she was replaced as head of the Women's Legion Military Cookery Section by Mrs Burleigh Leach.⁶⁹ By the beginning of

1917 there were 2,193 uniformed members of the Cookery Section of the Women's Legion serving with the Army at home.⁷⁰

At the beginning of 1916, at the suggestion of Miss Christobel Ellis of the Women's Legion, the War Office was asked whether it would accept the help of a corps of women drivers to release men, to be recruited, tested, and if necessary trained, by the Women's Legion, to work with the Army Service Corps.⁷¹ Once again, the offer was accepted: Miss Ellis was appointed Commandant, twenty women were selected to drive for the Army Service Corps on a month's probation,⁷² and this section of the Women's Legion was also extended and received official recognition.⁷³ By February 1917 the Women's Legion Motor Transport Section provided about 2,000 women for about 150 Companies, attached as Army Service Corps drivers to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and Australian, New Zealand and Canadian Forces.⁷⁴

The women of the Military Cookery and Motor Drivers Sections of the Women's Legion were the first to be formally accepted by the War Office to work directly with the Army, replacing men in certain areas, and they can be credited with helping to overcome the prejudice that 'women could not actually figure in the Army itself'.⁷⁵ But allowing relatively small numbers of women to be provided by such an uncontroversial organisation as the Women's Legion was not the same as employing women on a much larger scale throughout the Army. For one thing, apart from the payment made to the working women (which was less than the men they replaced would have been paid) the cost to the War Office of the administrative sections of the Women's Legion was extremely low.⁷⁶ When the expansion of the employment of women in the Army was considered, the question of whether or not the Women's Legion

corps should be a part of the new organisation was hotly debated. The Military Cookery Section was eventually forced into the WAAC and was included within the Adjutant General's department. But in the end, Cowans's protestations on behalf of the Motor Drivers' Section persuaded the Secretary of State for War to allow the Women's Legion to provide women for home service,⁷⁷ and in November 1917 a separate department, Q.M.G.3 (C), was formed as part of the Army Service Corps, within the QMG'S branch. This remained outside the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps throughout the war.

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FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 2 [Pages 32 to 48]

1. See, for example, *The Morning Post*, 6 August 1914.
2. *The Daily Mail*, 5 September 1914.
3. See Appendix VII for biographical notes about Mrs Fawcett, Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst.
4. Jo Vellacott-Newberry describes the WSPU as turning 'overnight on declaration of war from intransigent enemies of the government into pious Hun-haters'. Jo Vellacott-Newberry, 'Anti-War Suffragists', *History* 62, (October 1977) (Offprint) p. 425.
5. David Mitchell interview with Stella Newsome (Hon. Sec. Suffragette Fellow), David Mitchell Collection, 'Christabel Pankhurst, WW1', ML. [Undated; around 1964].
6. Christabel Pankhurst, 'America and the War', Speech at Carnegie Hall, New York, 24 October 1914. (WSPU). David Mitchell Collection, *ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Arnold Whittick, *Woman into Citizen* (1979) p. 63 and Appendix II. The International Woman Suffrage Alliance was formed after an International Woman Suffrage Conference had been organised as part of the annual Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, held in Washington DC in February 1902. Whittick, *ibid.*, p. 22 and Chapter 2. For a history of the international women's peace movement, which grew out of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, see Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 1915 - 1965* (1980 edition). The WILPF was the first - and remains the only - 'international women's organisation accredited as an NGO to the United Nations with peace as its top priority'. *Ibid.*, Foreword to 1980 Edition.
9. *Common Cause*, 7 August 1914 and Jo Vellacott-Newberry, *op cit.* p. 414. The latter notes that the gathering included a large attendance of working class as well as middle class women.
10. *Ibid.* See also Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, (1979 edition), p. 32.
11. Vellacott-Newberry, *op cit.*, p. 416. For information about some of those who continued to work for the peace movement, see, for example, *Militarism versus Feminism: Writings on Women and War*, Catherine Marshall, C.K. Ogden and Mary Sargent Florence, ed. Margaret Kamester and Jo Vellacott (1987 ed). Kamester and Vellacott record that 'there was relatively little public debate among British suffragists before 1914 on the issue of a feminist approach to international order and alternatives to war. This may have been in part because it was an issue on which women

were not ready to agree, and was also seen as one on which a radical stand would serve only to alienate some needed male political support'. Ibid., p. 4

12. *Common Cause*, 7 August 1914, p. 379; 14 August 1914, pp. 385, 390.
13. Catherine (Katie) Harley was one of the six sisters of Sir John French. She was killed on March 7, 1917, when a bomb was dropped on Monastir. [Votes for Women, Vol IX, April 1917]. Another, better known, was Charlotte Despard, socialist, pacifist and campaigner for women's rights. Richard Holmes, *The Little Field-Marshal - Sir John French*, 1981, p. 16; Monica Krippner, *The Quality of Mercy, Women at War, Serbia 1915 - 18* (1980), pp. 181, 186 - 96.
14. *The Morning Post*, 28 August 1914.
15. For example, there was Queen Mary's Appeal to Needlework Guilds; the Women's National Service League; appeals to work for the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Associations; Women's Liberal Associations; and the Central Committee on Women's Employment for England and Wales, whose function was to initiate schemes to provide work for women whom the war had thrown out of employment, and to act as an advice bureau and a link between official and voluntary agencies.
16. As Braybon writes, 'Wealthy women who wanted to do something for the war effort took up voluntary work... Working-class women, meanwhile, had no other jobs to turn to'. Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage, Women's Experiences in Two World Wars*, 1987, p. 32. Abbott describes the volunteers as 'leisure-class women'. Edith Abbott, 'The War and Women's Work in England', *The Journal of Political Economy* 25 (July 1917), p. 647. See Appendix III for notes about the difficulty of identifying class background.
17. *The Times*, 8 August 1914.
18. See Appendix VII for biographical notes about Haverfield.
19. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement* (1977 edition), p. 344.
20. Ibid., p. 309 and 326.
21. E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Home Front* (1987 edition), p. 38.
22. Condell and Liddiard, op. cit., p. 55.
23. Ibid., plate 48, p. 57.
24. See pp. 45 - 8. For biographical notes about Lady Londonderry, see Appendix VII.

25. Haverfield has been described as someone who was 'always in quest of a cause'. Monica Krippner, *The Quality of Mercy. Women at War, Serbia 1915 - 18* (Newton Abbot 1980), p. 73. Haverfield's commitment to war work appears to have completely replaced her earlier dedication to the fight for women's suffrage. I have not been able to find out exactly when or why Haverfield withdrew from the Women's Volunteer Reserve, but sometime during 1915 she went out to a hospital in Serbia, and joined Dr Elsie Inglis, with whom she also went to Russia in 1917. She chose to remain in Serbia after the war, and opened a hospital for tubercular and orphaned children, where in 1920 she died of double-pneumonia. (Ibid, pp. 29, 72 - 3, 199, 207, 209, 210).
26. *The Morning Post*, 10 August 1914.
27. *The Times*, 8 August 1914.
28. *The Morning Post*, 28 August 1914.
29. *The Times* 4 September 1914.
30. *The Times*, 15 December 1914.
31. Lady French was the wife of General Sir John French.
32. Sir Henry Chaplin [Lord Henry Chaplin, 1st Viscount Chaplin]; Conservative MP in the Commons at the outbreak of war. Chaplin occupied the front Opposition Bench after the formation of the Coalition Government in May 1915. *Sir Henry Chaplin, A Memoir prepared by His Daughter The Marchioness of Londonderry* (1926).
33. *The Times*, 17 December 1914.
34. *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 December 1914.
35. *Vera Brittain, Testament of Friendship* (1980 edition), pp. 38 - 45. Apparently Winifred Holtby's mother extracted the letter from the headgirl, and it 'became a "hot topical" of its day. The *Bridlington Chronicle* not only published it, but arranged for its syndication in Australia. Prints of it were taken and sold by Winifred and her mother at threepence each for the Red Cross, which made a useful little sum'. Ibid., p. 39.
36. Ibid., p. 40.
37. Ibid., p. 42.
38. *The Daily Mail*, 17 December 1914.
39. Ibid.
40. *For contemporaries' attitudes towards women's work in general, and the response to the expansion of women's employment in World War 1, see Gail Braybon, Women Workers in the First World War, op. cit.; Braybon and Summerfield, Out of the Cage, op cit.;*

Arthur Marwick, *Women at War* op. cit.; Deborah Thom, 'The Ideology of Women's Work', op. cit.; Sallie Heller Hogg, 'The Employment of Women in Great Britain 1891 - 1921', op. cit.; Meta Zimmeck, 'Jobs for the Girls: The Expansion of Clerical Work for Women, 1850 - 1914', in Angela V. John (ed), *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800 - 1918* (1986).; Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870 - 1950* (1984).

41. *The Anti-Suffrage Review* May 1909, p. 1.
42. John Massie, 'Report of Deputation to Prime Minister Mr Asquith, 21 June 1910', *The Anti Suffrage Review*, July 1910, p. 5.
43. For example, Arabella Shore, *The Present Aspect of Women's Suffrage Considered*, Pamphlet 197; Laurence Houseman, *Articles of Faith in the Freedom of Women*, 1910; A. Maude Royden (ed) *Physical Force and Democracy* (NUWSS April 1912).
44. J. Malcolm Mitchell, 'The Physical Force Objection', *The Men's League, Handbook on Women's Suffrage*, (1913) Chapter XVI, p. 128.
45. According to Lady Londonderry a favourite abuse during the First World War was to describe women as 'apeing' men.
The Marchioness of Londonderry, *Retrospect* (1938), p. 112.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 112 - 3.
48. Letter to the Editor from 'A Woman'; 'The King's Uniform', *The Morning Post*, 16 July 1915.
49. Letter to Editor from 'Another Woman', *The Morning Post*, 19 July 1915.
50. Letter to Editor from Isabel Hampden Margesson, *ibid.*
51. Letter to Editor from 'A Woman', *ibid.*, 21 July 1915.
52. See Appendix VII for biographical notes on Markham.
53. Letter to Editor from Violet Markham, *The Morning Post*, 22 July 1915.
54. See Bibliography for newspapers consulted.
55. Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* (1911), quoted in Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men, Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (1981), p. 337.
56. Faderman, *ibid.*, p. 20.
57. Women in modern military services also suffer accusations of lesbianism; many regard it as an unavoidable part of life in

uniform. Jan Parker, 'When You're Out you're Out - Services no Longer Required - What Life in the Women's Army is really like', *Spare Rib*, Issue 119, June 1982. According to Parker, homosexuality remains a 'serious military crime'. One WRAC interviewed claimed that men soldiers have no respect for WRACs - 'If you're in it, you're a Lesbian or a slut'.

58. *The Times*, 27 May 1915, 4 June 1915, 25 June 1915.
59. *The Weekly Dispatch*, 24 April 1921, IWM EMP 13/5.
60. *The Morning Post*, 19 July 1915, 'War Work for Women'.
61. *The Daily Chronicle*, 19 July 1915, IWM EMP 13/3.
Mrs Pankhurst's willingness to organise the 1915 procession has been criticised. Arthur Marwick claims that the war-time demonstration 'marked the funeral of the Suffragette Movement itself' - that from then on, Mrs Pankhurst's agitations were insignificant compared with the expansion of the Ministry of Munitions, and its 'increasingly sophisticated regulations for governing the employment of women'. Arthur Marwick, *Women at War*, op. cit., p. 55. But Mrs Pankhurst did not have uncritical approval from the government. An indication of the suspicions with which she was still regarded in some circles came in November 1915, when a meeting she was to have chaired at the Albert Hall was cancelled, after pressure from the government on the Albert Hall Council, as it was claimed that the purpose of the meeting was to denounce the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, not, as it had been promoted, for a 'patriotic meeting'. *The Morning Advertiser*, 17 November 1915. Questions asked in the House of Commons, 16 November 1915.
62. The word 'Legion' was adopted to recall ancient Roman attributes of efficiency and discipline: the founders had in mind a 'legion of trained and capable women enrolled for service and distributed in every county'. *War Service Legion and Women's Legion 1915 - 1918*, p. 11, IWM Army 11/11.
63. Within a few months the WVR had broken away from the Women's Legion, and became an independent organisation. In 1915 the Hon. Evelina Haverfield left and went to Serbia to join a surgical hospital.
64. Women's Legion booklet, op. cit., p. 4.
65. The War Office already employed women as clerks and typists, but such appointments were civil service appointments: the women were not regarded as being part of the Army. *Directorate of Organisation, History 1914 - 1918*, p. 589, PRO WO 162/6; Chapman-Huston and Rutter, op. cit., p. 86.
66. ACI No. 44 of 26 February 1916. (*Department of Organisation*, op. cit.) This laid down that members of the Women's Legion were to be engaged in various household duties in Convalescent Hospitals and as Instructresses in Military Schools of Cookery. It was later extended to include Officers' Messes, Base Depots

and Rest Camps. See Appendix I for selection of ACIs; see Appendix VII for biographical notes about Cowans.

67. Mitchell, *Women on the Warpath*, op. cit., pp. 249 - 52.
68. See D. Thom, 'Women Munition Workers at Woolwich Arsenal in the 1914 - 1918 War', op. cit., pp. 58, 74 - 6.
69. See Appendix VII for biographical notes about Mrs Leach.
70. *Directorate of Organisation*, op. cit., p. 589.
71. Marchioness of Londonderry, op. cit., p. 119.
72. Chapman-Huston and Rutter, op. cit., pp. 131 - 2.
73. ACI No. 221, 7 February 1917, Department of Organization, op. cit. p. 589.
74. Chapman-Huston and Rutter, op. cit., pp. 133 - 4.
75. 19 March 1918, 'National Motor Work', *The Motor*, IWM WS Army 1/32.
76. The Women's Legion did make occasional requests to the War Office for financial help in running their office; for example, in January 1917 the Commandant of its Cookery Section applied for an additional weekly grant of £2 to meet increasing expenditure in office administration, which the Treasury approved. Chalmers, Treasury to Secretary, War Office, 6 February 1917, PRO T24/53.
77. The WAAC provided women drivers for France.

CHAPTER 3

THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN DURING WORLD WAR I : DILUTION AND SUBSTITUTION

The introduction of the women's corps into Great Britain's armed forces during the First World War should be viewed within the context of the general pattern of women's employment in the period, the most notable features of which were dilution and substitution.' In 1915 the historian G.D.H. Cole described dilution as 'the introduction of the less skilled worker to undertake the whole or part of work previously done by workers of greater skill or experience, often, but not always accompanied by simplification of machinery or breaking up of a job into a number of simpler operations'.² The Ministry of Munitions' own definition of dilution, as recognised by the engineering industry, was stated in its Circular 129, issued in September 1915.³ This described the essential features of dilution as employing women in all classes of work for which they were suitable, and only employing skilled men on work which could not be performed by either less skilled [male] labour or women.⁴

During the First World War 'dilution' as an employment policy seems to have been interpreted according to the inclinations of those involved rather than through adherence to an official definition. For example, Alistair Reid points out that in the case of the shipbuilding industry, for both its management and concerned government administrators, dilution 'came to mean the relaxation of demarcation lines and the more flexible deployment of existing skilled male labour' rather than the introduction of female labour.⁵

'Substitution' was another term sometimes used interchangeably with dilution, and in some ways depicts more accurately the characteristics of women's employment during the war. Braybon describes dilution as a form of substitution, and lists four generally accepted categories.⁶ She also emphasises the difficulty of obtaining figures to show the number of women in each category. Marwick distinguishes between the processes of dilution and substitution; he regards the imposition of universal conscription as marking the change from when 'highly controversial "dilution", which had been designed to maximize the domestic labour force became "substitution", the attempt to release the able-bodied by the employment of the less able-bodied'.⁷

The difficulties experienced by those involved at the time in defining the nature of women's work as substitutes, as well as in calculating the extent of substitution and/or dilution,⁸ are reflected in more recent attempts to assess the relative success or failure of the policies. Braybon's efforts to clarify the 'precise nature of women's work as substitutes' and 'the extent to which they were successful in this role' was made more difficult because the position in both different industries and between factories in the same industry varied enormously; as she points out, the extent of substitution was never clearly established even during the war.⁹

It is not just an academic quibble to attempt to define both what was meant and understood by 'dilution' at the time; any appraisal of dilution as an employment policy during the war must take into account what dilution and substitution were intended to achieve. But

as the Board of Trade's *Report* indicates, the chief difficulty of trying to estimate the extent of substitution was 'one of definition'.

Alistair Reid describes the effect of dilution in the ship-building industry as 'little more than morale-boosting propaganda'.¹¹ He claims that the impression conveyed in the official propaganda of very extensive adoption of dilution is misleading; that 'far from being universally implemented, throughout the metal-working sectors, dilution was restricted both by the uneven impact of the demand for war materials on different sectors, and by the existence of a large number of tasks which were thought to be unsuitable for female labour'.¹² Of 14,000 women which the government claimed had been introduced on Clydeside in the first half of 1916, only 1,000 actually worked in the shipyards. The majority of women who worked in firms on the Clyde were employed in marine engineering shops, where there was plenty of 'suitable' light repetitious work available. Women seldom assisted skilled male workers, and many of them worked as clerks in offices, or on jobs such as painting and polishing.

Reid implies that as an employment policy, dilution was a failure because women were not actually replacing skilled men; still, if an additional 14,000 women worked on Clydeside, and whether by indirect substitution or rearrangement of jobs were contributing to the general productivity, some measure of the policy's success has to be acknowledged. Dilution was not introduced for the benefit of extending or improving women's employment experience; essentially, it was to encourage the provision of an effective, expanded workforce by whatever means should prove expedient.

Even when dilution and substitution are interpreted in the widest possible sense (to mean either the introduction of unskilled or semiskilled labour to take over all or any part of a job held by a man, or to include work performed by women which had not previously been done by anybody at all) it is no easier to make an informed judgement on their success or failure. Statistics on the subject gathered by the Board of Trade were considered unreliable by that body. In 1916, when employers were asked to 'state the estimated number of women now engaged on work hitherto performed by men', the inconsistency with which different employers included or excluded women in their returns was regarded as the explanation for substitution figures in many trades being lower than expected.¹³ Some employers included only women who did all of a man's job; others included those who performed merely a part.

Concern about the extent to which each woman employed was actually doing a man's job was not mere idle curiosity about changing trends in employment: women in Munitions could be paid less, for example, on the grounds that manufacturing processes had been changed.¹⁴ Concern, too, about the potential threat posed to working men if women were used as cheap labour ensured that trade unions retained a lively interest in the matter.¹⁵

This is not the place for a detailed discussion about the problems of analysing the relative success or failure of dilution. The significance of the situation for the development of the women's corps movement was that the British military services needed more men; this was possible only if, somehow, industry and transport, commercial services and all the other jobs essential to the running of the

country could continue to function satisfactorily without them. And they did. As Braybon writes: 'the only thing certain was that the number of women in industry and transport *had* increased; the number of men decreased, and that in some way the nation was surviving through the efforts of women'.¹⁶ Those responsible for encouraging the employment of women, whether by direct or indirect 'substitution' or 'dilution', could surely feel they had contributed to a measure of success, even if the long term consequences of substitution were less than satisfactory for women.¹⁷

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On the eve of the war, according to figures provided by the 1911 census, nearly 6 million females aged ten years and over,¹⁸ representing about 29% of the officially recorded labour force,¹⁹ were recorded as being 'gainfully employed'. The largest number worked in domestic service, followed by the cotton industry, where women worked mostly as weavers or piecers.²⁰

The immediate impact of the outbreak of war on British industry was 'an abrupt and considerable curtailment of production'.²¹ Large numbers of both men and women suffered unemployment in these first months, but women were more seriously affected. The cotton trade was badly hit, and so were the so-called 'luxury' trades, dressmaking and millinery, for example, as well as domestic service.²² While men had the option of enlisting,²³ working women who lost their jobs had no immediate alternative to turn to. According to Board of Trade reports, by September 1914, 44% of all women who had been employed in July were now either working on short time, or were out of work.²⁴

The fall in women's employment caused concern, and efforts were made to ease the situation.²⁵ The Home Secretary appointed a Central Committee on Women's Employment, which was expected to encourage schemes for provision of paid work for unemployed women and girls.²⁶ The situation improved with the gradual recovery of trade and the continual withdrawal of men for the Forces. By April 1915 the number of women in employment had returned to the pre-war level; rather than unemployment there was a shortage of labour, especially skilled labour.²⁷ As might be expected, the revival took place most rapidly in industries which gained government contracts to produce war supplies; in the metal and chemical trades, and leather, woollen and food industries. Already some women in non-industrial jobs were working in areas previously excluded to them, such as transport, but at this time very few women were employed on work normally done by men in any industry, especially in the engineering industry.²⁸

It was the growing munitions shortage, clearly apparent by early 1915, which created the demand for labour and precipitated the expansion of women's employment on a large scale. The first and crucial step was securing trade union approval for dilution.²⁹ In February 1915 a committee was set up to investigate the means of increasing production in engineering and shipbuilding.³⁰ It generated rapidly a number of reports, including one concerned with the production of Shells and Fuses, which recommended that as the numerous operations involved were of such a nature that they could be - and indeed, in some shops already were - suitably performed by female labour, there should be an extension of the practice of employing women on that work 'under suitable and proper conditions'.³¹ The

Report urged the necessity of relaxing existing demarcation restrictions and extending the use of the semi-skilled and unskilled when the necessary skilled labour could not be obtained.³²

The next significant step was the conference held in March between government representatives and some thirty-five trade unionists - none of them women - which produced the Treasury Agreement. This admitted the relaxing of trade practices to allow the use of unskilled labour to take on part of the work of skilled men, on the understanding that this concession would be for the duration of the war only.³³ The signing of the Treasury Agreement marked the formal introduction of 'dilution'.

Early in March 1915, before the Treasury Conference had been held, Parliament had passed a bill allowing the government to take control of munitions factories.³⁴ In June the Ministry of Munitions was set up³⁵, and at the beginning of July the first Munitions Act was passed, embodying the terms of the March Treasury Agreement, and confirming the use of unskilled labour in areas from which it was previously excluded.³⁶ Lloyd George declared the government's intention was to suspend during the war 'restrictions and practices which interfere with the increase of output of war materials'.³⁷

The formation of the Central Munitions Labour Supply Committee in September 1915, with its brief to plan a Scheme for Dilution as well as to examine wages and conditions, led to the ubiquitous 'L' circulars on wages and substitution in engineering. L2 and L3, the relevant women's circulars, were used as a basis to determine rates of pay for women, despite their obvious flaws.³⁸

In an effort to make women's labour more readily available, in March 1915 the Board of Trade opened a special Women's War Register, inviting women of all classes to enrol.³⁹ The Board of Trade itself admitted that the actual placings from the Register did not amount to more than a few thousands, but it claimed that it served the useful purpose of calling the attention of employers to the possibilities of female labour.⁴⁰ By July 1915 some 87,000 women had registered voluntarily; just 2,000 had been placed in work.⁴¹ A few months after the Women's War Register was set up a National Register was initiated. This was intended to provide a record of all persons aged between 15 - 66, and to include information as to whether they were employed on work for a government department or war purpose.⁴² Initially, females were to have been excluded from this register, but after indignant complaints from women, that omission was rectified.⁴³

Encouragement for substitution of men by women was not confined to the munitions industry: throughout the summer and autumn of 1915 Board of Trade Labour Exchange Officers tried to persuade employers in a wide range of activities to extend their employment of women.⁴⁴ They paid particular attention to employers in shops, banks, insurance companies, local authorities, War Office and Admiralty contractors, and other trades. They also talked with the Board of Education about the substitution of women for men teachers in rural areas; with the General Post Office about employing women as postmen and letter sorters; with the Railway Executive Committee about employing women on railways; with the War Office about employing women in Military hospitals, and with the London County Council about various training schemes.

Committees were appointed by the Home Secretary to consider the consequences of the enlistment of men and their replacement by women in the Retail Trades⁴⁵, and in clerical and commercial employment.⁴⁶ On the recommendation of the latter committee, county boroughs and county councils were asked to organise the supply and training of women in their areas to act as substitutes for men who joined the services. Home Office and Board of Trade officials arranged conferences between employers and workers in various trades to encourage further the introduction of women as substitutes, and as a result, a number of formal agreements regulating the extended employment of women were drawn up between employers and workers' associations. According to the Board of Trade Report, the first such agreement was negotiated in June 1915, for the Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Industry,⁴⁷ and from then on, and especially after December 1915, the conclusion of similar agreements progressed steadily. They were widely regarded as emergency measures and usually contained such specific conditions as when peace was declared work should revert to the custom of the trade before the war, or that the employment of women on work previously performed by men should not continue without further agreement, or should cease altogether as soon as men were available.

A general review of the position with regard to the substitution of women for men in employment was undertaken at the end of 1915, by an interdepartmental committee named the Women's Employment Committee.⁴⁸ Significantly, this Committee included a number of people who became involved in the negotiations to set up the women's military corps.⁴⁹ The Committee was concerned only with substitution

in essential manufacturing industries other than munitions,⁵⁰ because the other main branches of employment in which it considered substitution of women practicable - clerical employment, the distributing trades and agricultural - had been or were being dealt with by other committees and departments.⁵¹

The Committee's *Report*, published in January 1916, drew attention to the vast amount of men's work which, it believed, could and should be carried out by women, as well as to the existence of very large reserves of women.⁵² The Committee made a number of recommendations. It urged the Government to make a public appeal to employers to consider problems caused by the shortage of male labour. It also encouraged the continued organisation by the Home Office of conferences between employers and work people. Most importantly, it proposed the setting up under the *Labour Exchange Act*, in various parts of the country, Local Committees to help local labour exchange officers and the Home Office and Board of Trade in the work of extending the employment of women.⁵³ To coordinate this scheme, it suggested that a Central Advisory Committee be appointed, with representatives from both employers and workers, as well as the Home Office and Board of Trade, to 'survey, co-ordinate and give energy and direction to the general work of substituting women for men in the manufacturing industries of the country other than those industries which are under the control of the Ministry of Munitions'.⁵⁴ The Central Committee should meet 'constantly', and would advise where local committees should be set up, and consider who should be appointed to them; the Board of Trade regarded this as the most

important aspect of the work undertaken by the Central Advisory Committee.⁵⁵

The Board of Trade and the Home Office acted upon all of the Committee's recommendations. Local committees were set up around the country, and by September 1916 they were operating in some 36 towns.⁵⁶ Their constitutions, and the problems they dealt with, varied according to local circumstances. In places where there was a shortage of women labour, such as certain textile districts, the local committees concentrated on trying to recruit women workers from among those not yet employed. In towns where large numbers of women were required for munition work, and workers had to be brought in, the committees would attempt to organise lodgings, and initiate welfare schemes. Typically, their first step would be to enquire amongst employers of the district their present and prospective requirements for women; they would then go about trying to organise the necessary supply.⁵⁷ Members of the local committees were chosen for their interest in questions of women's employment, and included employers, workpeople and members of societies such as the Women's Co-operative Guild, YWCA, Girls' Friendly Societies, and others similar.

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The general situation on the eve of the foundation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was undoubtedly conducive to the extension of women's employment into new areas. By September 1916 statistics relating to the number of women employed since the outbreak of war showed unequivocally that an increase had taken place in most principal occupations.⁵⁸ According to these statistics, since the war began in July 1914, an estimated total of 743,000 additional women had

begun working in the occupations included in their records.⁵⁹ Between April and July 1916 there was a total recorded increase of 283,000 women, of whom 87,000 went into industry and 44,000 into government arsenals and dockyards. It was difficult to estimate the number of women engaged in making munitions, but it had been calculated that by September 1916 there were approximately 300,000 - 400,000 women making munitions.⁶⁰ Not all the women working in the metal and chemical industries were actually working on munitions, but it was reckoned that this would be balanced out if women in the wood trades who worked on aeroplane work were included in the figures.⁶¹ There had been little difficulty in obtaining women for munitions work, or, indeed, in obtaining them to work as direct substitutes for men in 'typical' men's trades.

The Board of Trade observed that there was a large amount of substitution in commercial and professional occupations and transport, where technical difficulties were few; this work 'on the whole appeals to leisured middle-class women'.⁶² There were, however, serious shortages of women in 'women's industries'; it was indisputable that women and girls preferred to enter munitions factories to working in textiles.⁶³ But as the *Report* recorded, 'The higher wages prevailing in munitions factories and on "men's work" generally tend to attract women away from the ordinary employments. There is, for example, a genuinely patriotic desire on the part of women to be engaged on what is directly and obviously "war work", and in some cases a sense of the greater dignity and superior status attaching to "men's work"'.⁶⁴ The time was ripe for a military initiative.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 3 [Pages 55 to 66]

1. See: Sallie Heller Hogg, 'The Employment of Women in Great Britain 1891 - 1921', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford (1967), Chapters 16 and 17; Marion Kozak, 'Women Munition Workers During the First World War, with special reference to Engineering', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hull, Chapters 3 and 4; Deborah Thom, 'The Ideology of Women's Work 1914 - 24, with special reference to the NFWW and other Trade Unions', unpublished PHD thesis, Thames Polytechnic (1982), Chapters 2 and 3; Deborah Thom, 'Women Munition Workers at Woolwich Arsenal in the 1914 - 18 War', unpublished MA thesis, University of Warwick (1975); *Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War*, October 1916, LSE Bev. Papers IV/9. See also Braybon and Summerfield, op. cit.; Braybon, op. cit., pp. 54, 61, 63; Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge. British Society and the First World War* (1979 edition), pp. 57-8. Edith Abbot, 'The War and Women's Work in England', *The Journal of Political Economy*, July 1917, pp. 656 - 66; Adam W. Kirkaldy (ed), *Industry and Finance (Supplementary Volume)* (1920); A.W. Kirkaldy, (ed) *Credit, Industry, and the War* (1915), pp. 68 - 193; Irene Osgood Andrews and Margaret Hobbs, *Economic Effects of the War Upon Women and Children in Great Britain* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1918).
2. G.D.H. Cole, *Labour in Wartime* (1915), quoted in Braybon and Summerfield, op. cit., p. 31.
3. M.B. Hammond, *British Labour Conditions and Legislation during the War* (Oxford 1919), p. 143, quoted in Braybon, op. cit., p. 51.
4. See also Alistair Reid, 'Dilution, trade unionism and the state in Britain during the First World War' in S. Tolliday and Zeitlin (eds), *Shop Floor Bargaining and the State* (Cambridge 1986) p. 52.
5. Reid, *ibid.* But Reid also writes that by early 1916 'the question of the substitution of women for men became so prominent that from then on "dilution" was understood to refer to these new experiments in female employment'. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
6. The categories are: direct substitution (one woman replacing one man and carrying out all his work); indirect substitution (women replacing unskilled men who take on skilled work); group substitution (several women replacing fewer men); substitution by rearrangement of processes). Braybon, op. cit., p. 61.
7. Marwick, *The Deluge*, op. cit., p. 79.
8. For example, the Board of Trade, the Home Office and the Ministry of Munitions were all concerned with the nature and extent of the substitution of women. *Report on Increased Employment of Women During the War*, op. cit., p. 9 - 13.

9. Braybon, op. cit., p. 60. The Board of Trade *Report* emphasised the manner in which the employment of women differed widely between groups of industries. *Report on Increased Employment of Women During the War*, op. cit., p. 12. Deborah Thom also comments on the difficulty of detecting where dilution took place, and where substitution; consequently it is not easy to assess trends in women's labour at this time. Thom, 'The Ideology of Women's Work', op. cit., p. 55.
11. Reid, op. cit., p. 51.
12. Ibid., p. 50.
13. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War*, op. cit., p. 9.
14. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, op. cit., p. 61. Braybon also notes that from an historical viewpoint it is 'important to know how capable women were, given the chance to do skilled work'.
15. Braybon and Summerfield, op. cit., p. 35. According to the Board of Trade, the problems which arose in connection with the substitution of women were, in the main, not problems of supply of female labour, but rather, the willingness of employers to use women; the agreement of the male trade unions; the capacity of women for the work, and the length of training required. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women*, op. cit., p. 12.
16. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, op. cit., p. 61.
17. In her study of the ideology of women's work in the period 1914 - 1924, Deborah Thom argues convincingly that 'dilution and substitution rested on the belief that women needed protection and were less productive as workers' and that these processes 'institutionalized inequality at work'. Thom, 'The Ideology of Women's Work', op. cit., pp. 1 and 1/2. Other criticisms of dilution include the lack of adequate training provided for women who took over men's jobs, and the exploitative nature of a policy which was from the start regarded as a temporary expedient.
18. This was almost a third of the total number of females of that age. United Kingdom, *Abstract of Labour Statistics, 1915*, p. 307, quoted in Irene Osgood Andrews and Margaret A. Hobbs, *Economic effects of the War upon Women and Children in Great Britain, 1918*, p. 14. This source provides the following figures:

'Domestic' pursuits	-	2,000,000
Worked for central govt.	-	53,000
'Professional occupation'	-	415,000
(the majority of these were teachers or nurses)		
Food, drink, tobacco, and provision of lodgings	-	546,000

Female agricultural workers	-	120,000
Manufacturing industries	-	2,275,000
(metal trades = 93,000)		

19. Braybon and Summerfield, op. cit., p. 11.
20. Heller Hogg maintains that the most striking feature of women's employment in Britain in the period 1891 - 1914 was its division from men's; of the 21 'industries' into which the nation's occupations were divided, just 3 - personal service, clothing and textiles - were 'women's', in the sense that women constituted a majority. These 3 industries accounted for 7/10ths of all working women. Heller Hogg, op. cit., p. 504.
21. Abbott, op. cit., p. 642.
22. Abbott, *ibid.*; Braybon and Summerfield, op cit. p. 32.
23. Abbott reports that the reduction in the number of working men employed between July 1914 and October 1914 was 10.7%, 'almost precisely equal to the percentage of working men known to have joined the military and naval forces'. Abbott, op cit, p. 643.
24. *Ibid*, Table I, p. 643 - 4. See also *Report on Increased Employment During the War*, op. cit., p. 3.
25. The Board of Trade's *Report on Increased Employment* claims that together with the Home Office, its officials 'attempted to reorganise industry with a view to reducing women's employment'. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
26. The Committee had fourteen members, five of whom were chosen by the War Emergency Workers' National Committee, which had been formed after a conference of representatives of labour organisations had met early in August 1914. Its secretary was Mary Macarthur, Secretary of the Women's Trade Union League and Chairman of the National Federation of Women Workers. Abbott, op cit., p. 647 - 8. It survived until 1940. Violet Markham gives sole credit for the creation of the Committee to the 'vision and enterprise of Mary Macarthur'. Violet Markham, *Return Passage, The Autobiography of Violet R. Markham*, C.H. (Oxford 1953)., pp. 149, 164, 189.
27. Abbott, op. cit., p. 656 - 61. *Report on Increased Employment of Women During the War*, op. cit., p. 3.
28. Braybon, op.cit., p. 45.
29. According to Braybon, it was only with great reluctance that women were accepted into most skilled trades. Braybon and Summerfield, op. cit., p. 35. However, Kozak suggests that the rank and file of trades unions feared men dilutees more than the introduction of women, and she notes numerous instances recorded of skilled male workers opposing the introduction of other men. Kozak, op. cit., p. 81.

30. For steps towards dilution, see Abbott, op. cit., pp. 661 - 2. Kozak, op. cit.; Thom, 'The Ideology of Women's Work', op. cit.; Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, op. cit.; Braybon and Somerfield, op. cit.; Marwick, *The Deluge*, op. cit. pp. 58 - 9.
31. 2nd Interim Report, 20 February, 1915, *Labour Gazette*, March 1915, p. 83, quoted in Abbott, op. cit., p. 662. Andrews and Hobbs, op. cit., p. 45.
32. Early in March a *Shells and Fuses Agreement* was made between the Employers' Federation and the Engineering Unions, which permitted unskilled labour, including women and boys, to operate some machines in the munitions industry, though not to carry out skilled work. Braybon, op. cit., pp. 51 - 2; Braybon and Summerfield, op. cit., p. 35. This agreement laid down what became a crucial feature of most, if not all dilution agreements; that in return for the acceptance of some measure of dilution, the dilutees would be regarded essentially as labour for the period of the war only. Marwick, *The Deluge*, op. cit., p. 58.
33. Abbott, op. cit., pp. 663 - 4; Andrews and Hobbs, op. cit., pp. 46 - 7; Braybon, op. cit., pp. 52 - 3; Braybon and Summerfield, op. cit., p. 35; Marwick, *The Deluge*, op. cit., pp. 58 - 9.
34. Braybon, op. cit., p. 52.
35. The Ministry of Munitions brought together 'over 90 businessmen, as government advisers, and grew into a vast and efficient machine for organising dilution'. By 1918 it employed 65,000 people, and it eventually owned 250 factories and ran another 20,000 'controlled Establishments'. Braybon and Summerfield, op. cit., p. 37.
36. According to Andrews, the First Munitions Act set up an unprecedented degree of control over workers through three different methods; the prohibition of strikes; the restriction of the right of individuals to leave work (the infamous 'Leaving Certificate' system); and by the establishment of the special Munitions Tribunals, which punished breaches of workshop discipline, and regulated leaving work. Andrews and Hobbs op. cit., p. 82.
37. Gerry R. Rubin, *War, Law, and Labour. The Munitions Acts, State Regulation, and the Unions 1915 - 1921* (Oxford 1987), p. 230. Rubin claims that the imposition of dilution of skilled labour was only a secondary concern of the munitions code, its primary purpose being 'to prohibit strikes and minimise leaving of work by individuals'. [From Andrews and Hobbs, op. cit., p. 55, quoted in Rubin, p. 230]. Rubin supports this claim by pointing out that throughout the war there was a 'virtual absence of legal proceedings in munitions tribunals, in order to underpin the Government's widely proclaimed policy of dilution of labour'. Ibid., p. 231. A possible explanation for the lack of legal action may be that government officials recognised that

the success of dilution depended upon those involved in accepting the 'spirit' of the policy; threat of legal proceedings would probably act against such acceptance.

38. The circulars were concerned with the employment and remuneration of women 'on work customarily done by men' but they only dealt with women's wages when women were doing work previously done by men. Thom, 'Women Munition Workers at Woolwich Arsenal', op. cit., pp. 51 - 2 and Appendix 1; Braybon, op. cit. p. 54.
39. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War*, op. cit., p. 4.
40. Ibid.
41. 73 H.C. Deb. 5s Cols. 441 - 2.
42. *The Times*, 29 June, 1915; 8 July, 1915.
43. *The Times*, 8 July, 1915; 73 H.C. Deb. 5s., Cols. 441 - 2. See Footnote 52 below for results of the National Register as they related to women.
44. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women*, op. cit., p. 4.
45. This committee was set up in March 1915 to consider enlistment from the Distributive Trades in England and Wales, and made its Final Report (Cd. 8113) in October 1915. Separate committees were set up for Scotland. *Report on Increased Employment*, op. cit. Separate committees were sent up for Scotland.
46. Ibid. The committee dealing with clerical and commercial occupations was set up in October 1915, and reported on 8 November 1915. (Cd. 8110).
47. Ibid, p. 4.
48. *Report of the Women's Employment Committee*, 20 January, 1916. LSE Markham 4/11. Also PRO NATS 1/78 File W/100: Recruitment of women.
49. The members included Violet Markham, Frances Durham and C.F. Rey of the Employment Exchanges department, and Cecil Harmsworth, the Chairman of the Women's Employment Committee.
50. It defined these as industries producing essential materials and articles necessary both for export and the support of the population. Munitions factories were excluded from its deliberations as they were under the immediate control of the Ministry of Munitions. Ibid.
51. *Report of the Women's Employment Committee*, op. cit., p. 1.
52. The Registrar General had provided the Women's Employment Committee with the results of the National Register (August,

1915) as they related to women: 'The returns of potential workers - i.e. persons who declare themselves able to undertake work other than that (if any) in which they are at present engaged - are not, in the opinion of the Registrar-General of much value, and in any case they would not have much bearing on the present question, as many of these women are already in employment. The Register shows, however, as was indeed well known, that there is a very large number of women at present unoccupied - some seven millions in all, of whom four and a half millions are between the ages of 20 and 45. We think that a substantial proportion of those who have returned themselves as unoccupied, as well as a proportion of the one and a half millions who have returned themselves as engaged in household duties or domestic service, may be regarded as available'. *Report of the Women's Employment Committee*, *ibid.*, para. 8, p. 3.

53. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
54. *Report of the Women's Employment Committee*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
55. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Without greater knowledge of the workings of these local employment committees, it is difficult to evaluate their contribution to the expansion of women's employment in this period, or even their success in providing accommodation, welfare services, or the workers required.
58. The Employment Department of the Board of Trade made monthly enquiries into the state of employment. These figures excluded those working in domestic service. Because of the classification used, the number of women listed as working in a particular occupation is somewhat misleading; a woman was classified according to the business of her employer, and not according to the work she did. For example, a clerk in a boot and shoe factory would be included under 'Industrial occupations' rather than commercial, while a woman who drove a motor for a retail shop would be included in 'Commercial' rather than 'Transport'. Under 'Professional' occupations were included the clerks of professional people, such as solicitors and accountants. *Report of the Women's Employment Committee*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
59. The actual total given was 866,000. It was estimated that about 150,000 women had lost jobs in domestic service and workshops such as dressmaking (occupations not included in the official statistics). By adding 27,000 women recorded for the first time who were nursing soldiers and sailors, the total of 743,000 was reached. See Appendix VI, Table 1.

60. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women during the War*, op. cit., p. 8.
61. There were 334,000 women in metal trades; 77,000 women in chemical trades; 69,000 women in government arsenals and shell factories. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women during the War*, ibid., p. 8.
62. Ibid., p. 9.
63. Ibid., pp. 9 and 13.
64. Ibid., p. 13.

CHAPTER 4

1916 - TOWARDS A WOMEN'S CORPS (I)

1. The Recollections

At the heart of the question was not so much doubt about the ability or the reliability of women, but an unformulated but powerful fear of the consequences of their intrusion in strength into an entity so exclusively and aggressively male as an army in the field.¹

So writes the author of a history of the Women's Royal Army Corps, of the opposition during the First World War to the employment of women by the Army. He also comments that it had taken two and a half years of war to make 'a dent...in the wall of military prejudice' which till then had 'barred the employment of any females except those in the nursing and medical services, even in the base areas'.²

Published accounts by those involved at the time of how and why the women's military services came to be established in Britain during the First World War reveal conflicting stories about who initiated the women's corps; they throw little light either on the attitudes towards the innovation, or on the events that led up to it. Often, the stories imply that there was no discussion at all: that the WAAC simply 'appeared'. This may reflect an unawareness caused by muddle: Violet Markham wrote that having lived and worked through two world wars, she was prepared to be dogmatic on one point: 'there is no comparison between the greater efficiency and order of the second as against the first. There was plenty of chaos in the second, but I can only assert it was child's-play compared with the confusion that raged in 1914'.³ Confusion certainly continued long after 1914, and it was

difficult enough to keep track within official circles of the plans to cope with the ever-growing need for more workers, let alone with schemes designed by the profusion of women's voluntary organisations.

An article which appeared in 1917 in *The Times*⁴ and other newspapers claimed that in May 1915 a colonel in charge of the Ordnance Department at one of the bases in France startled the War Office by suggesting that women could be used in many departments of his work. Shortly after that, a commanding officer of Engineers 'diffidently and independently' proposed that women might be employed in the different branches of Signals.⁵ About the same time, the article records, the Women's Legion started as a voluntary organisation to supply motor-drivers and cooks in great numbers for home commands. But the idea of having women at bases in France seemed 'too stupendous' at first, and nothing happened until the Women's Legion had shown that 'carefully selected women would not prove an unsettling influence'. According to *The Times*, during this period of experiment with the Women's Legion, 'Ordnance and Signals kept up their cry for women, and then, like Minerva leaping full-armed from the head of Jove, the formation of a Women's Army was suddenly and unexpectedly announced on February 27th [1917]'.⁶ An abbreviated version of this graphic piece of journalism was later reprinted in *The Times History and Encyclopaedia of the War*.⁷

Among the numerous volumes of *The Official History of the War*, only the one which deals with the Air Force mentions the women's services in World War I, though it provides little indication of official thinking on the subject, apart from noting that in view of the importance attached to the recruitment of women for the Air

Services, it would 'be of interest to review briefly the story of their association with the armed forces'.⁸ Even less informative on the subject are the *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*.⁹ Lloyd George was Secretary of State for War in the six months immediately preceding the establishment of the WAAC. His only mention of the WAAC appears in a generally disapproving passage about the Ministry of National Service (MNS); he comments, in an inaccurate representation of events, that a good deal of useful work was inaugurated by the Department of National Service which later bore fruit, in particular, 'the organisation of women's service by the Women's Branch under Mrs Tennant, which gave us the WAACs and the land girls'.¹⁰

When Lloyd George became Prime Minister at the end of 1916, Lord Derby was promoted to the post of Secretary of State for War, but he left no autobiography, and Randolph Churchill's *Official Biography* does not mention the WAAC.¹¹ Derby was fairly sympathetic to the employment of women in the Army, and certainly he presented no great obstacle to the establishment of the WAAC. Lloyd George's secretary,¹² Frances Stevenson, described him as having a will 'of the consistency of jelly and the last person he sees dominates him', but she concluded he was 'a dear, and a great and lovable personality, with no guile of any kind in his makeup, and a winning kindness and good nature which endears him to everyone - a real gentleman...'.¹³

Frances Stevenson portrays the War Office as a difficult place in which to work: no-one who had not worked inside it could 'realise what a hotbed of intrigue and jealousy it is. The officials are powerful, especially in society and at Court, and I realise now what people meant when they talked of the danger of attempting to touch the

Army or reform the War Office'.¹⁴ Stevenson claims that at the least grievance the heads of Department went to Buckingham Palace or the Press, and gave them official information which should have been kept private. Stevenson's diaries at this time make no mention of the women's services, though her entry on 14 November 1916 reports that 'David says...that we may get conscription of women in the near future. I think it is very necessary'.¹⁵

The biographers of General Sir John Cowans, Quartermaster-General at the War Office during the First World War, complain that 'It is not sufficiently appreciated how much the inclusion of women in the Army was due originally to the foresight and goodwill of Cowans as QMG'.¹⁶ They record of Lady Londonderry's innovation as head of the Women's Legion - the replacement of male cooks by women - that 'it was owing to the approval, support and far-sightedness of Cowans that the experiment of substituting women cooks for men was given a trial'.¹⁷ But all did not go smoothly, and

...if it had not been for the encouragement and civility which the Women's Section invariably met with from the Quartermaster-General's Branch, in which Branch they were incorporated, coupled with the tact and discretion of the ladies themselves, some of the departmental obstacles could scarcely have been surmounted...At this date it is difficult to realise what heart-burnings, coupled with genuine anxiety and distrust of such an innovation, was caused not only amongst the officials of the particular branch in the War Office under the QMG but amongst Commanding Officers and their Staffs, by the suggestion that it was possible that women might be called upon to act as substitutes for men in any capacity whatsoever in the British Army.¹⁸

The authors claim that it was not until the conference held in the War Office in February 1917, to examine the proposal for employing women more widely in the Army as a solution to the manpower problem,

that it was even realised that the Quartermaster-General already had an organised body of women serving in his various branches.¹⁹

Cowans was both involved with, and appreciative of, the work done by women of the Women's Legion, but in the crucial months at the end of 1916 he was probably too preoccupied with his own personal problems to play much of a part in any debate about how best to organise women on a wider scale.²⁰ His contribution to this particular development was restricted in the main to the fact that he had been willing to accept the scheme for women cooks in 1915.

Given Nevil Macready's central position in relation to the introduction of the Women's Corps, as Adjutant General at the War Office, his account of events is markedly uninformative.²¹ Macready describes how, soon after he returned to the War Office in 1916, his private secretary (male) wanted to go and 'do his bit' at the front, and he instantly agreed, replacing him with a woman. This move proved an 'unqualified success' and his personal office got a reputation for getting things done quickly.²² The scheme for the general employment of women 'gradually, and not without opposition materialised'. Lord Derby invited several ladies 'whose names were prominent in schemes for the utilisation of women's work to a conference on the subject at the War Office' and as a result, the WAAC was launched early in February 1917, with Mrs Chalmers Watson²³ as Chief Controller: 'This new departure of enrolling women as part and parcel of the Army was not carried through without considerable opposition and criticism, as a rule grossly unfair, and mainly from critics of their own sex'.²⁴ If it is true that women were critical, it is often because they objected to the manner in which the War Office had set about

instigating a women's corps without proper consultation with the women who for months had been considering how to organise such an operation.

Dame Katharine Furse waited until after the Second World War began before she produced her autobiography.²⁵ According to her, it was not until the end of 1916 that the War Office showed signs of increasing their use of women, 'doing so with such secrecy and hurry that they almost caused a tumult'. She describes how she was resting peacefully that Christmas, 1916, when she was

suddenly called to the telephone on Boxing Day by an official of a Women's Service Bureau in great agitation. Had I heard anything of a Colonel Leader and a Lady in black spectacles who were going round London in a taxi-cab trying to collect 11,000 women clerks to be sent to France at once. The number stuck in my head because it was the number of women said to have been led to their martyrdom by Saint Ursula in the Third Century.²⁶

Enthralled by this news, Furse tried to see Sir Auckland Geddes,²⁷ the Director of Recruiting at the War Office, but was fobbed off with his assistant, to whom she offered her help: 'and probably being suspected, as usual, of wishing to boss, I left, satisfied that at last something concrete would be done to harness some of the woman-power which seemed to be running to waste'.²⁸ Furse is rather modest about her own contribution to events: as we shall see, it was one of her 'schemes' to set up a corps of women to work with the army which was the first such plan to be considered seriously by those who were attempting to cope with the shortage of manpower.

One of the more fanciful accounts of the establishment of the first women's military corps is provided by Sir Auckland Geddes himself. At the end of 1916 he was Director of Recruiting in the Adjutant General's department at the War Office.²⁹ It was his sister, Mona Chalmers Watson, who was appointed the first Chief Controller of

the WAAC in Britain. Geddes recounts a conversation in November 1914 between himself and his sister, when she apparently bemoaned the fact that voluntary armies took the best of the nations, and insisted that they should let women do many of the jobs then done by the volunteers both in Great Britain and overseas.³⁰ Mrs Chalmers Watson pointed out that women would make good clerks, typists, could drive cars, cook, clean, pack stores, keep reserve weapons and ammunition in order (all the things, coincidentally, that the first WAACs did, in fact). Geddes replied: "But do you suppose Mrs Grundy will let the Government take thousands of girls away from home and put them in Army camps?" "Mrs Grundy!" Mona retorted. "Women are citizens, and should have the right to play their full part in the national life, in war and peace!".'

Mrs Chalmers Watson had emphasised that she was not thinking of private effort: there should be a Women's Corps, organised by the Admiralty and War Office, properly uniformed, equipped by the State, forming integral parts of the Services: "...we've got to use our brains to see that we do as little damage as may be to the future of the nation. Before this war is over there will, I prophesy, be Women's Units in the Navy and Army".³¹ Wise after the event, perhaps, but no doubt Auckland Geddes considered that posterity should give his sister credit for more than just being appointed first head of the first women's corps. Geddes had told Mona that she would have to mobilise public opinion against 'the Mrs Grundy's of the nation, who would certainly oppose women's involvement'. When he saw his sister again, in Spring 1915, she grumbled that it was not so much the 'Mrs Grundy's of the land' but the 'political Mr Grundy's that are

giving the trouble - especially the Prime Minister Mr Asquith Grundy, and his Cabinet colleagues of the Clan Grundy. They are afraid of the English non-conformist conscience. They think they'll lose votes if they let women play their part'. But they would beat them yet, and it was only a matter of time.

Geddes writes that Chalmers Watson was introduced to Lord Derby when the latter became the new Secretary of State for War, and that to him she 'expounded her ideas with regard to the formation of the women's corps'. Derby apparently was impressed. At another meeting between the Secretary of State for War, Adjutant General Nevil Macready and Mrs Chalmers Watson herself, according to Geddes, Derby introduced Mrs Chalmers Watson to Macready as the lady 'who thinks that she should have in the Army, as an integral part of its organisation, an Auxiliary Corps composed of women - and commanded by women - to relieve men of the multitudinous home and base duties of the type that women can do as well as men'. The Adjutant General replied that he had heard of Mrs Chalmers Watson's ideas before, but asked: 'Do you think that the public will stand for it? Fathers won't like their daughters being sent to serve in military camps'. Chalmers Watson replied that she was not (yet) suggesting conscription or universal compulsory service for women, and that if a Women's Corps auxiliary to the Army was formed, they would get as many volunteers as they could handle.

"Yes", said the Adjutant General, "I expect we should - and then, before we know where we are, we should have a first-class scandal and be held up as organisers of vice! I don't want to be called a White Slave Trader"³² He admitted that it was true women

could do all the work that Mrs Chalmers Watson suggested - 'but can the politicoes be persuaded to take the risk? If the Prime Minister agrees, I am confident the Army Council will agree'. Derby said he was sure the Prime Minister would be all right: '"It's just the sort of thing that will appeal to Ll. G's rather Puckish sense of humour"'. The Adjutant General said that he was prepared to 'answer for the soldiers', and that if Derby agreed, they had better get in the Director of Recruiting. Auckland Geddes claimed that it was not till that point that Mrs Chalmers Watson told Derby that the Director of Recruiting was her brother - which prompted Derby to ask if it was 'a Geddes family conspiracy'.

Geddes's story does not even accord with the account given by his sister, but as he left no papers, it is impossible to ascertain whether Mrs Chalmers Watson played quite so prominent a role in initiating the WAAC as he claimed. From the records available, it seems that Mrs Chalmers Watson had no contact with the War Office until some time after Macready had the matter well in hand. As Mrs Chalmers Watson tells it, she was in Edinburgh at the end of January 1917, when she received a summons to attend a meeting in London on February 4, convened by the Secretary of State for War.³³ She went down to London, and saw Miss Anderson³⁴ on February 2. Miss Anderson had heard rumours of a scheme for employing thousands of women - 'But Mrs Chalmers Watson had no idea what the meeting would be about'.³⁵ She saw her brother, Sir Auckland Geddes, on Monday,³⁶ and heard from him that behind the scheme was a confidential report drawn up by General Lawson in France. (If this order of events is accurate, Geddes's story is obviously a fabrication). Mrs Chalmers Watson was

given permission to show Lawson's report to Miss Anderson, Mrs Tennant, Miss Markham and Miss Clapham, and as the meeting with Lord Derby had had to be cancelled because he was ill, they were able to meet immediately.³⁷ Mrs Chalmers Watson recalled that she then returned to Edinburgh, and got a wire inviting her to the postponed meeting, and that later, on Friday February 14, she was asked by Adjutant General Nevil Macready to head the new women's scheme if Derby approved. Mrs Chalmers Watson was invited to see Macready and Lord Derby, possibly at the recommendation of her brother, but there is no indication that she was responsible for proposing a Women's Army corps. Perhaps Auckland Geddes wished to establish that his own position at the War Office had not influenced the decision to appoint his sister to head the Corps: this was, rather, due to her own merit and forethought.

It is not only contemporaries who have provided an unsatisfactory record of events. In one popular history of the WAAC, the writer claims that the investigations carried out by the Adjutant General into how women might be used more by the Army, were originally prompted by the Director General of National Service, who is quoted as saying at the end of November 1916 that he would never be able to find the number of men required for the firing line unless he could compel women to take up essential war work.³⁸ 'In the circumstances some of the best brains in the army were exercised on the problem of man-power economy and it was not long before they went a step further and for the first time seriously considered large scale replacement of men by women'.³⁹ But the Director-General of National Service had not been appointed at the end of November 1916, and it seems unfair to give

to 'the best brains of the army' for solving the problem, when these 'best brains' merely took over and adapted ideas already formulated by women in less powerful, unofficial, positions.

Helen Gwynne Vaughan, the first Controller of the WAAC in France, presented her view of the sequence of events in the months before the WAAC were established in her book, *Service with the Army*.⁴⁰ She writes that after Haig, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies in France, had agreed to accept a number of women for duty in the back areas of the army, and Lt. General Lawson had published his first report on the best ways to economise on manpower in the field, Geddes suggested that his sister should be consulted. According to Gwynne Vaughan, Mrs Chalmers Watson 'was present in her new capacity at a conference of representatives of women's societies called by Lord Derby on 26 January 1917, to inform them of the new plan'.⁴¹

On Sunday evening, 11 February, Dr Louie Garrett Anderson invited her friend to meet Mrs Chalmers Watson, and there Helen Gwynne Vaughan 'heard for the first time of the projected corps of women for duty in France. It seemed like the realisation of a dream. I asked at once to be allowed to serve'.⁴² Dr Anderson indicated that Helen might be appointed to head the Corps in France, and the following day she and Mrs Chalmers Watson spent the day planning their new corps. On Tuesday, 13 February, Helen Gwynne Vaughan went for the first time to the War Office, to be interviewed by Nevil Macready.⁴³ A week later she was appointed to head the Corps in France. She had a further interview with Macready, where she met Lieutenant Colonel Leigh Wood,⁴⁴ who was the head of AGXI, the department set up to control the new women's organisation, and she and Mrs Watson were

informed that its title would be the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. They were both to be called chief controllers: 'We were of the same rank, but she was senior to me'.⁴⁵ They were equivalent to lieutenant-colonels and, as soon as they could get their uniform, 'might put up the badges of that rank'. Gwynne Vaughan reported that she did so in due course, but that Mrs Watson 'was more cautious. She would have nothing to do with merely verbal authority'.⁴⁶

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11. The Circumstances

The idea of an official 'Women's Army' - a uniformed corps of women, with officers, regulations and drill, which could be sent to France as an auxiliary force - can be seen as a logical development of the government's policy of dilution and substitution in industry, though recognition that women might usefully replace men in appropriate places in the Army or Navy was more slowly conceded. Early in the war Lord Kitchener had raised the question of substitution of male labour by women, as part of the drive to sustain the country's fighting forces, but it is unlikely that he was considering jobs other than in industry or commerce.⁴⁷ When, early in 1916, the War Committee⁴⁸ considered how best to solve the increasing manpower shortage in the Army itself, it was concerned with the use of 'coloured men' from South Africa, Egyptians to replace English dockers in France, and foreign labourers generally who could perform duties currently done by soldiers in the rear of the Army and on the Lines of Communication, rather than women.⁴⁹

The impetus for a Women's Army Corps seems to have come directly from the efforts of Katharine Furse. At the time the War Committee was discussing the employment of coloured labour in France, at VAD headquarters Furse was drafting plans for a corps of women war workers. It was concern about the inefficient manner in which women were recruited and employed which prompted her to raise the idea of forming 'Women's Service Detachments', and in March 1916 she produced the first of many 'Schemes'.⁵⁰ The inspiration for her plan can be seen in at least two existing women's organisations: the VAD,⁵¹ and a 'Home Service Corps', set up in Liverpool in 1915 for the specific

purpose of organising women who had not previously entered the labour market.⁵² The latter had been training its members in the technicalities of certain professions and trades (in addition to physical drill) and its Commanding Officer, a Miss Phyllis Lovell, had recently been appointed Welfare Secretary in a Munitions factory. It had been suggested that the Home Service Corps might usefully be extended and put on an official basis, with assistance from the Ministry of Munitions, in order to carry out certain objectives: to form a Women's Munition Battalion on the lines of the Dockers' Battalion; to supply all government factories near Liverpool with suitable women; to organise a 'First Aid Corps', and to gain a sufficient hold on workers' discipline so as to render strikes impossible.

In her 'Scheme for Organisation of Women's Service' Furse suggested that all women workers should join a 'Corps', under the control of a government department, which would be run by officers who would organise and supervise women's work.⁵³ Furse proposed the setting up of Women's Service Detachments (WSD), to be organised on the same lines as the VADs; members might transfer to WSDs from VADs, and wear the same uniform, but different badges. Existing women's corps would be permitted to join the WSD scheme only if they undertook to conform to regulations. At the head of this new women's organisation would be - Katharine Furse.

In these initial stages the scale of Furse's proposal is unclear, but from the beginning she included a plan for a 'Women's Army System'.⁵⁴ There was plenty of work in the Army for which women were suited: indeed, women were already being employed in many areas.⁵⁵ But Furse was critical of the current lack of control of

such workers, and she warned that unless action was taken there could be 'difficulties' in the future. She complained that the women tended to waste money on their dress; too much familiarity with men was possible; housing conditions were not always good and women were not always properly fed. What Furse envisaged was a replication of conventional men's forces; there should be women officers, NCOs and privates; a training camp where 500 women a month could be trained, with the chief object of 'instilling a sense of Discipline and Esprit de Corps'. Women should be paid at the same rates of pay as men in the Army, and receive the same allowances; an Officers Training Corps should be formed at once, and a Staff College would be necessary.

In April Furse was invited to take charge of the Women's VADs in England, Wales and Ulster for the period of the war.⁵⁶ She accepted the appointment, but continued her efforts to extend the scope of women's work outside the VAD, and wrote to Violet Markham, describing her plan for a Women's Service Detachment.⁵⁷ Markham's response was encouraging, and Furse wrote again, suggesting a meeting of interested parties: herself, Markham, Frances Durham, Mrs Tennant and Miss Macarthur, perhaps.⁵⁸ Something needed to be done urgently. VAD HQ received numerous requisitions for non-hospital workers; Furse was adamant that if VADs were to be extended to work other than nursing, it should be in response to an appeal from government officials. Yet the likelihood of such an appeal seemed remote, she complained: 'What frightens me most is the absolute lack of foresight among the Military Authorities. They will not train women and we have practically come to the end of good trained women'.⁵⁹

What Furse had in mind at this time was that government departments which employed large numbers of women, such as Munitions and Agriculture, should combine with existing women's voluntary organisations - for example, VAD, YWCA, Women's Legion and Women's Voluntary Reserve - to form one large organisation in which all members would be registered.⁶⁰ As she saw it, the root cause of all the current disorganisation in women's employment was lack of 'Central Control' and a 'Central Register of Women Workers', together with the 'Want of the Right Spirit among Women'.⁶¹

Furse regarded the situation as offering women a chance which they had never had before, but she considered that many women failed to recognise the responsibilities which were part of these new opportunities. She encouraged others to join her in pressing for changes, and at her instigation a group of women got together to discuss a wide selection of topics, which included not only the lack of co-ordination and bad organisation, the problems of different pay rates, and the need for a 'Central Register' and 'Central Control', but also how to avoid chaos after the war, the effect of the nation neglecting its children, the waste in canteens of women, food and money, and the replacement of men abroad.⁶² Furse considered it was essential for the government itself to take the necessary steps to coordinate and control the numerous organisations of women war workers doing work connected with the War Office and Ministry of Munitions.⁶³ A 'Memorandum of Organisation', written in May 1916, raised the possibility of appointing a 'Director General' to co-ordinate Women's War Work, who would work in close touch with the War Office and the Ministry of Munitions: all workers, whether paid or unpaid, should

register through the Labour Exchanges. A desire for better organisation of women workers was not the only reason for pressing for action; the final sentence in the 'Memorandum of Organisation' proclaimed, a trifle ambiguously: 'We are all very tired of devoting our whole energy untiringly to the State without any official Status'.⁶⁴ This was a sentiment expressed by both Katharine Furse and Violet Markham at least, on more than one occasion.

Over the following months Furse persisted in her efforts to reform the regulation of women's work, and continued to press for a new body to co-ordinate it. She wrote to Lord Selborne, Minister in the Cabinet for the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries at the time, who told her she had 'raised a very big question' about which he would consult with Runciman at the Board of Trade.⁶⁵ This prompted Furse to write optimistically to Frances Durham that she felt sure 'that by dint of talking and writing' she was 'beginning to get people to realise that there is a great danger in the chaos produced in Women's Work by the over-lapping of various departments, organisations etc., all calling on the same women at the same time to do different work and always doing so as "An Appeal to Patriotism"'.⁶⁶ What was needed was 'to follow the women through the war, not just see them into jobs and leave them to fate'; for this reason there must be a central women's organisation.⁶⁷

Together with Frances Durham and Miss Burnett of the Board of Trade, Furse tried to persuade the Canteen Committee of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) to initiate reforms in the Canteens, but it became rapidly and disappointingly apparent that Canteen Committees were not the place to press for radical changes in the

organisation of women's work.⁶⁸ A week later she wrote again at length about the need for some form of official enlistment of women under government control, similar to what had been used for soldiers before compulsion was introduced.⁶⁹ By now Furse was adamant that existing voluntary groups, such as the Women's Legion or Women's Voluntary Reserve, could not be expanded for the purpose. It was not just that their experience was too limited, she complained, but that most of them had broken off from the Women's Emergency Corps at various stages: 'it would therefore seem that their organising officers are too independent in character to co-operate'.⁷⁰ A representative committee comprised of members of such organisations would be difficult to work with and Furse urged 'that a competent man be approved as Director-General of Women's War Work'.

Furse produced yet another 'Scheme' in September, in which she called for the government to set up a Central Women's Department, with a view to the substitution of women for men in work connected with the Army, and 'State Service' for women, in which they could have the honour of wearing the King's Uniform.⁷¹ She contended that if women deserved 'one fraction of the praise showered on them in the press, they deserve this Honour which would be inestimably appreciated by them'.⁷² If such an organisation were started, Furse predicted it would soon be found that women could be used in many spheres from which they were excluded at present, because of the difficulty of controlling them, and she pointed to the number of soldiers working in England and the Bases in France, who could be replaced by women, and thus freed to join the fighting corps. An essential element of her proposal was that women should be controlled by women, and not men.

'Compulsion' was not necessary at this time; there were plenty of women ready to help and longing for a chance, but they could not afford to do so in the present conditions, where they could be thrown out of their jobs at a week's notice, and where the State remained uninvolved in their care. Parents, too, would be more willing to allow their daughters to take up war work if they were assured they would be properly looked after.

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Arthur Marwick describes the introduction of compulsory universal male conscription for military service, in May 1916, as marking 'the crucial turning point' for women's employment: the enforced withdrawal of men from the domestic front meant a 'push towards full-scale employment of women in all occupations'.⁷³ By contrast, for Braybon the turning point comes sooner - early in 1915, when it was clear that the war would last and there was a growing munitions shortage: it was women's success at work which enabled the government to introduce conscription in January 1916, rather than that the introduction of conscription permitted the expansion in women's employment.⁷⁴ Statistics support either interpretation of events; the figures indicate an expansion of women's employment from 1915 onwards, with what has been described as a 'rush' into munitions by Autumn 1915.⁷⁵ But there was a particularly large growth in numbers for the quarter between April 1916 - April 1917, which suggests that indeed compulsory conscription had a marked effect on women's employment, and it put increasing pressure on employers - both private and government - to replace men by women wherever possible.⁷⁶

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 4 [Pages 74 to 92]

1. Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps* (1977), p. 1.
2. Ibid.
3. Violet Markham, *Return Passage, The Autobiography of Violet Markham* (Oxford 1953), p. 142.
4. *The Times*, 'Our Women in France. 1. Why the WAAC was sent out, from "Our Special Correspondent", 19 November 1917, p. 11. Also published in *Daily News and Leader*.
5. I found no evidence to support either of these stories. The suggestions may have been made, but did not provoke serious discussion among those in a position to implement them.
6. *The Times*, 'Our Women in France', 19 November 1917, op. cit.
7. *The Times History and Encyclopaedia of the War*, Vol. XVII - Part 221 (1918), Ch. CCLXI, 'Women's Work (III): War Services', pp. 433 - 46. This version appeared without the reference to 'Minerva' leaping.
8. H.A. Jones, *The Official History of the War; The War in the Air*, Vol VI (Oxford 1937), pp. 70 - 4.
9. *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, Vol. III (1934).
10. Ibid., Ch. XLV, p. 1367.
11. R.S. Churchill, *Lord Derby 'King of Lancashire': The Official Life of Edward, 17th Earl of Derby 1865 - 1948* (1959).
12. See Appendix VII for biographical details. Frances Stevenson became Lloyd George's secretary in 1913. On occasion her position encouraged women to try and persuade her to use her influence in connection with the women's military services, especially in relation to the WRAF and its problems in 1918.
13. Frances Stevenson, (ed A.J.P. Taylor), *Lloyd George, A Diary* (1971), 3 March 1935, p. 302.
14. Stevenson, *Lloyd George, A Diary*, op. cit., pp. 115 - 6.
15. Ibid., 14 November 1916, p. 123.
16. Major Desmond Chapman-Huston, and Major Owen Rutter, *General Sir John Cowans GCB, GCMG, The QMG of the Great War (Vol II)* (1924), p. 84.
17. Ibid., p. 85.
18. Ibid., pp. 86 and 88.

19. Ibid., p. 133.
20. See Appendix IV for an account of an incident between Mrs Cornwallis-West and 2nd Lieutenant Patrick Barrett, into which Cowans was drawn.
21. Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of An Active Life*, Vol. I (1924), pp. 267 - 70. See Appendix VII for biographical notes.
22. Ibid., p. 268. Macready was not the only War Office official to employ a woman in this capacity. Frances Stevenson recorded in her diary: 'I am sharing some of the reflected glory. People have just woken up to the fact that L1.G. has a lady Secretary, or rather, that the Secretary of State for War has a lady Secretary. I have people calling to interview me, and I have my photograph in the papers!'. Frances Stevenson, op. cit., 26 July 1916, p. 110.
23. See Appendix VII for biographical notes on Mrs Chalmers Watson.
24. Macready, op. cit., p. 270.
25. Katharine Furse, *Hearts and Pomegranates, The Story of Forty-five Years 1875 - 1920* (1940), pp. 348 - 53. See Appendix VII for biographical notes on Furse.
26. Furse, *Hearts and Pomegranates*, op. cit., p. 348.
27. See Appendix VII for biographical notes on Sir Auckland Geddes.
28. Furse, *Hearts and Pomegranates*, op. cit., p. 348.
29. Sir Auckland Campbell Geddes, *Forging of a Family: A Family Story Studied in its Genetical, Cultural and Spiritual Aspects and a Testament of Personal Belief founded thereon* (1952).
30. Ibid., pp. 251 - 64.
31. Ibid., p. 256.
32. Ibid., p. 258
33. Interview with Mrs Chalmers Watson, Edinburgh, 9 June 1918, IWM Army 3 12/5. Either Mrs Chalmers Watson did not keep an accurate diary, or the interviewer confused the timetable of events, for there are numerous small inaccuracies and indiscrepancies between days and dates.
34. Mrs Chalmers Watson's cousin was Louisa Garrett Anderson, daughter of Dr Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first woman to qualify as a Doctor in Britain. Louisa - 'Louie' - was at that time Senior Surgeon of a military hospital in Endell Street, London, run by the Women's Hospital Corps, with Dr Flora Murray as Senior Physician.
35. Chalmers Watson interview, op. cit.

36. Mrs Chalmers Watson said she saw her brother on Monday, February 2nd; Monday was February 5th - Friday had been the 2nd.
37. Chalmers Watson said that the meeting was held on 11 February 1917, but according to the official Minutes, the meeting that she had been called to attend was on Tuesday 6 February. Derby originally called the meeting for 30 January (not 4 February, as Chalmers Watson suggests).
38. Col. J.M. Cowper T.D. WRAC (Ret'd), *A Short History of QMAAC*, WRAC Assn. Duke of York's HQ (1967), p. 17.
39. Ibid.
40. Gwynne Vaughan, op. cit., pp. 11 - 12.
41. This version bears no relation either to Mrs Chalmers Watson's account (which stated that she first came down in February) or to Auckland Geddes's story that essentially it was Mrs Chalmers Watson who had prompted the setting up of the new Women's Army Corps, and that Derby did not know at the time he first discussed the matter with her that Geddes and Mrs Chalmers Watson were related. The meeting on the 26 January was, in fact never held; it was cancelled because of Derby's ill-health.
42. Gwynne Vaughan, op. cit., p. 13.
43. During their conversation they discovered that Macready had been the Adjutant of the Gordon Highlanders, when Helen Gwynne Vaughan had 'come out' at their ball in Aberdeen in 1896.
44. Sir James Leigh-Wood, KBE, CMB, CB. See Appendix VII for biographical notes.
45. Gwynne Vaughan, op. cit., p. 14.
46. Ibid.
47. At a CID meeting early in 1915 it was considered how far recruiting could be continued without impairing the country's position as a fighting force, and Lord Kitchener insisted that the whole question depended on the organisation of labour: 'Men who could fight must work, and vice versa. Employees must eventually be replaced by women and others'. 131st Meeting of CID, 27 January 1915, PRO CAB 2/3.
48. The War Committee was the third of the separate body of advisers set up by the Cabinet to consider the general conduct of the war. The first was the War Council, which met irregularly and infrequently between 25 November 1914 and 14 May 1915. Its function was to examine strategic problems and particular aspects of war policy, rather than the day-to-day conduct of the war. It was replaced in June 1915 by the Dardanelles Committee, whose main concern was operations in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli. By September 1915 the Cabinet decided a war committee with more executive power and wider concerns for the

conduct of war on all fronts was needed, and the Dardanelles Committee was replaced by the War Committee, which first met on 3 November 1915, and remained in operation until it was replaced in December 1916 with Lloyd George's much smaller War Cabinet, of just five members.

49. Minutes, 77th War Committee, 10 March 1916, PRO CAB 22/12; Minutes, 79th War Committee, 23 March 1916, PRO CAB 22/14; Minutes, 81st War Committee, 11 April 1916, PRO CAB 22/16. For the story of Coloured Labour Corps in World War I, see Miscellaneous No. 331 'Memorandum on Steps Taken to Increase the Supply of (a) Coloured Troops (b) Coloured Labour, and on the use by the Naval and Military Authorities of Colonial Government Officials', 31 January 1917, PRO CAB 1/23 (2). Also 'Report on the Work of Labour with B.E.F. during First World War', 14 November 1919, Brig. Gen. Controller of Labour BEF to QMG, PRO WO107/36, pp. 1 - 8. See also Michael Summerskill, *China on the Western Front, Britain's Chinese Work Force in the First World War* (1982).
50. K. Furse, 'Scheme for the Organisation of Women's Service Detachments', 15 March 1916, IWM EMP 17/7.
51. Furse explained it would be impossible simply to extend the VAD for her purpose, largely because it was funded by the Red Cross and under the terms of the Geneva Convention, members of VADs could be employed only on work for Sick and Wounded. Ibid. Furse considered the existing VAD organisation unsuitable as a foundation for her WSD for other reasons: the County Directors were unbusinesslike, too busy with other work, or slack, and Commandants of local detachments, often chosen for their social position in the county, were often occupied elsewhere, and had no knowledge of discipline. K. Furse, 'Facts which make the present VAD Organisation unsuitable as a Foundation for the WSD's', (undated) IWM EMP 17/8.
52. Unsigned memorandum on Home Service Corps, 3 March 1916, IWM EMP 17/3.
53. K. Furse, 15 March 1916, op. cit.
54. Ibid., p. 3.
55. Furse considered suitable work for women would be: in canteens, kitchens and laundries; as munitions supervisors and officers; in factories making Army clothing and Boots; the Army Post Office; Army Service Corps; Army Pay Department; as Ambulance Drivers; in the Intelligence Department and Record Offices.
56. A. Stanley to County Directors, 12 May 1916, LSE Markham 4/12.
57. K. Furse to V. Carruthers, 18 April 1916, LSE Markham 4/11.
58. K. Furse to V. Markham, 26 April 1916, Ibid. For biographical notes about Durham and Macarthur, see Appendix VII.

59. Furse to Markham, 26 April 1916, *ibid.*
60. K. Furse, 16 May 1916, IWM EMP 15/11.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Notes for Mrs Creighton's Meeting, 23 May 1916, IWM EMP 15/12.
63. Memorandum of Organisation, 24 May 1916, IWM EMP 15/14.
64. *Ibid.* The 'Memorandum of Organisation' is unsigned, but the style is convincingly that of K. Furse.
65. Lord Selborne to K. Furse, 19 May 1916, LSE Markham 4/11.
66. K. Furse to F.H. Durham, 20 May 1916, *ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*
68. 'Organisation of Women's Labour in Canteens', Note on Proceedings of Conference of the Canteen Committee, 18 July 1916, LSE Markham 4/11. The functions of the Canteen Committee were advisory, and limited to industrial canteens; it had no jurisdiction of any kind over military canteens. In addition, members of the Canteen Committee believed the need for voluntary workers in industrial canteens was diminishing.
69. K. Furse, 'Memorandum on Enlistment of Women', 25 July 1916, IWM EMP 15/16.
70. *Ibid.*
71. K. Furse, 24/25 September 1916, IWM 15/18.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Marwick, *Women at War*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
74. Braybon and Summerfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 34 and 38. Braybon comments that it was 'An unfortunate fact that women's skills and enthusiasms made conscription possible'.
75. Andrews, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 and 50. According to Andrews, between Autumn 1915 and early 1916, the *Labour Gazette* was reporting the increase of substitution of women. *Ibid.*, p. 36. Andrews writes that by April 1916, about one woman industrial worker out of every seven was replacing a man, with the total number of women substitutes in industry standing at 375,000 at this time.
76. Adam Kirkaldy gives the increase in the number of women employed during the year April 1916 - April 1917 as 651,000. He compares this with an increase of just 301,000 for the year April 1917 - April 1918. A. Kirkaldy, *Industry and Finance, Supplementary Vol.* (1920), p. 3.

CHAPTER 5

1916 - TOWARDS A WOMEN'S CORPS (II)

1. The Official Response

On 6 June, 1916, Lord Kitchener and his staff, on their way to Russia in *HMS Hampshire*, were reported missing when their ship sank. David Lloyd George was appointed Secretary of State for War, replacing Kitchener at the War Office. During the second half of 1916 government efforts to solve the growing problem of shortage of manpower, and to reconcile the conflicting demands of different departments, worked to encourage War Office officials to consider the idea of a Women's Army Corps. The process was a lengthy one.

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At the end of June, on behalf of the Army Council, the Adjutant General, Nevil Macready, drew the attention of the War Committee to a matter of concern in the County of Hereford.' Recruiting had been successful there, and there were no surplus males of military age on the land. By arrangement with the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Army Council had left the bare minimum of men of military age on farms, who, with the help of women, boys and old men, could maintain production. Now the Ministry of Munitions was advertising for labourers in the County at wages which would attract men and women from the land into the factories. The Army Council considered this action 'contrary to the national interest': if soldiers were released to maintain production their training would be wasted, and it would cause unnecessary dislocation of both Army organisation, and

agriculture. And similar vicious circles had already been established in other munition-producing areas, especially in rural districts. The problem was not easily resolved, and at an Army Council meeting at the end of July, it was decided to press for the appointment of a strong central committee with power to organise the distribution of man-power and 'effectively satisfy the legitimate needs of various Government Departments now competing against each other'.²

On August 2, Lloyd George circulated to members of the Cabinet a memorandum from the Adjutant General to be considered at the War Committee meeting on 5 August, proposing the establishment of a Manpower Distribution Board.³ Macready claimed that they had already achieved wonderful results with compulsory service and in the five months it had been applicable to single men, and one month applicable to married men, approximately 700,000 men had been obtained for the Army. Now, sufficient legal powers existed for all men to be distributed according to requirements, provided that a Board be set up separate from the Government Departments which competed for manpower, which would determine the relative importance of competing demands, and which would have final absolute power as to the allocation of men available. At present, the Admiralty, War Office, Ministry of Munitions, Home Office, Board of Trade, Post Office, Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise all competed on a large scale to prevent their men being taken by the other Departments. The position made it impossible for the War Office to give the General Staff accurate forecasts as to the possible or probable numbers available in future, as calculations depended on factors over which the War Office had no control.

The Board of Trade agreed in principle that it would be a good idea to establish an authority to decide between the competing claims of different departments, but raised what it considered to be a question of utmost importance: whether the new authority would

be limited to allocating the man-power which is statistically available, or will it be empowered to criticise the internal arrangements of the army, navy, munition works, docks and wharves, etc., with a view to insisting that each of these organisations should utilise their labour force in the most economical manner possible? Clearly any such power would have very far-reaching results. If, on the other hand, the Board is to take every demand for men at its face value, it will be impossible for it to discharge its task of allocating the man-power of the country in the most effective way.⁴

The Board of Trade believed that the Manpower Board must have the power to call on any of the departments named in the Adjutant's memo (including the combatant departments) to explain its arrangements in regard to the utilisation of manpower, and to satisfy the Board that the arrangements made as economic use as possible of man-power, not using men of military age when older men or women would serve. This view was to be repeated in the following months, and undoubtedly encouraged the War Office to look more carefully at how best it might utilise women. It was not simply that women would be useful for replacing men in some areas of the Army, thereby releasing men for combatant duty. By organising women to work for the Army the War Office would be seen to be doing its best to rationalise its own man-power, and would therefore stand a better chance of having its requests for more men approved. If, on the other hand, it had opposed the establishment of a women's corps, it could fairly be accused of failing to take all steps within its power, and thereby forfeit the right to call for more manpower.

E.S. Montagu of the Ministry of Munitions did not like Macready's proposition.⁶ He argued that setting up such a board would result in highly controversial legislation; the Munitions Act went as far as it was probably safe to go in the organisation of labour, with whom relations were now satisfactory, and it would be a fatal error to jeopardise matters; his department could not support the plan. His opposition was predictable. In a letter to Beveridge after the Board had been set up, F.H. McLeod at the Board of Trade wrote that 'the *raison d'être* of the Manpower Board had been to settle disputes between Departments as to the use of manpower...Indeed there would have been no Man-Power Board if the Ministry of Munitions and the Army Council had not reached an impasse'.⁶

There was considerable debate about how to proceed, but by August 22 the establishment of a Manpower Distribution Board, and its Draft Terms of Reference, had been approved by the War Committee.⁷ It was agreed that the Board would

determine all questions arising between Government Departments, relating to the allocation or economic utilisation of manpower for the purpose of successful prosecution of the war...and in order to give its effect to its determination - to direct Government Departments concerned to create the machinery to co-ordinate their activities in regard to distribution or utilisation of men and women.⁸

Any Government Department making an important demand for more man-power must put its proposal to the Board, which should decide on the feasibility of the proposal; the Board would have power to call for any evidence it thought necessary, and to direct Departments to obtain such information as it required. The decisions of the Board were to be final, unless they were appealed against to the War Committee. This last directive gave the Manpower Distribution Board

some executive power, in theory at least, though it proved ultimately insufficient to resolve the conflict between departments.⁹

There followed the tricky problem of who should be Chairman: Lloyd George said they wanted a Committee with authority; Curzon said they wanted a Committee that would accept the authority of a Chairman. At the War Committee meeting on 30 August, the Prime Minister announced that Mr Austen Chamberlain had agreed to take the office of Chairman of the Manpower Distribution Board, and Lord Midleton would be Vice-Chairman,¹⁰ and by 12 September the War Committee had agreed the members of the Board.¹¹

The Manpower Distribution Board produced its first report by the end of September, and at the beginning of October published a memorandum approved by the War Committee.¹² The Board had heard evidence from the Admiralty, Army Council, Ministry of Munitions and other government departments which had convinced its members that both armies and munitions factories urgently needed fresh supplies of men in order to maintain the supply of munitions essential for their equipment and utilisation. In order for this to be possible 'dilution' must be increased. At the moment, its implementation varied enormously in different district and works. The Board regarded dilution as the only way in which an extension of the age for compulsory service could be avoided, and it asked the Board of Trade and the Labour Adviser to confer with employers and Trade Union leaders about extending its practice to firms engaged wholly or partially on private work. The Board also reported that it was considering further steps for the better organisation and extended use of women, and men over military age.

According to Frances Durham, the 'proposal for employing women in auxiliary army services was first seriously mooted officially' when she, together with Mr Beveridge and Katharine Furse, attended before the 'Man-Power' Board to give evidence on 'Women-Power'.¹³ It is not clear when Durham and Furse appeared before the Board, but Beveridge was there on 6 October, accompanied by the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith.¹⁴ Smith presented the Board with the *Report on the Increased Employment of Women during the War*,¹⁵ and announced that they were pleased to find all returns showed that the pace was accelerating - though they were certainly not yet satisfied. But he himself had no definite suggestions to make with regard to women, except perhaps to put more force into the measures described in the Report. Smith rejected the idea that there was a pool of unemployed trained women waiting for work, and agreed with the Chairman that the supply of trained female labour was probably already fully occupied.

The Chairman asked whether the Board of Trade had ever considered whether women should be enrolled in a corps and paid during the time of training, thus creating a moveable force of labour which could be employed wherever it was required? Smith replied there was no such Corps, and on being asked whether he had seen the memo that Mrs Katharine Furse had sent him on the topic, he explained that he had received it, but had not yet studied it. The substance of her memorandum was described: she spoke only of non-industrial women, and suggested that a corps of women should be enrolled and given a uniform. Had Smith considered any such scheme himself, and if not, did he think that the employment of women might be enormously

increased if he had such a trained and disciplined body of that kind ready to hand? Smith referred this question to Mr Beveridge, who was a member of the Joint Standing Committee of the Home Office and Board of Trade on substitution of women for men, but Beveridge replied that the Committee had not considered such a scheme. At the suggestion that Furse's memo be submitted to the Committee, Smith agreed that they might consider it, but expressed the view that it might be open to all kinds of objections - which he could not see for the moment.

Soon after the meeting with the Manpower Distribution Board, Miss Durham wrote a 'Note on Substitution of Women and its further extension in connection with utilisation of Manpower'.¹⁶ The past two years' experience had proved the existence of very large reserves of women willing to work and available for 'substitute employment', and their 'employability' for a wide variety of industrial and other services that in pre-war times were performed by men generally or entirely. At the present time, without any general appeal to women's services, the Live Registers of the Labour Exchanges stood at a very high level. Despite the fact that the rate of progress in substitution of women for men had throughout been retarded by the attitude of employers, and of men who were being substituted, the process had been steady, if slow.

But there was one very considerable field in which women were so far employed on a small scale, and which offered very large possibilities for dilution: the non-combatant branches of the military services. Systematic dilution of those non-combatant services would release a large number of men for active service, such as general service duties in military hospitals; clerical work in Army Pay

Offices; ordnance and other offices; canteens, storekeeping, postal services, transport duties. A large number of women were employed as nurses in military hospitals, but only a few had been used for general orderly duties in these hospitals, despite an order issued by the War Office in January 1916. The decision as to whether any particular hospital should employ women was apparently left to the commanding officer concerned, and the result had been poor. As for the Women's Legion, a few hundred women were employed through Lady Londonderry's Women's Register, in convalescent camp canteens and as motor drivers, but the terms of their employment were insecure, without the privileges or the discipline of military service. A considerable number of women had been working at Army Pay Depots and recruiting offices throughout the country, but now, in order to provide occupation for C3 men, in certain depots women were being discharged and replaced by such men.¹⁷ Durham suggested that what was needed was a systematic inspection of camps, hospitals and offices, to determine the extent to which dilution might be introduced, and the conditions under which women might be 'enlisted' for the purpose.¹⁸

In response to a request from the Manpower Distribution Board for its views on women's corps, the Board of Trade drew a distinction between the use of women in ordinary industrial and other private employments, and their use in non-combatant branches of War Office administration: as far as the former was concerned, it believed such an organisation was neither necessary nor practicable. Substitution of women for men in private employments had to be dealt with individually. It was 'impossible to contemplate a single trained corps of women moving from one part of the country to another to

undertake in one place agricultural work, in another boot-making'.¹⁹ In any case, the general substitution of women for men in private industry was being actively undertaken by the Board of Trade and the Home Office together. But the employment of women in connection with the War Office was another matter, and Mrs Furse's memo deserved to be considered carefully.

As far as clerical work was concerned - especially work in the Army Pay, Ordnance, and other offices - the Board of Trade felt there was no need for a special organisation. The women could be supplied in the same way as to other employers, and all that was necessary was that the policy of employing women in such work should be uniformly and vigorously enforced. But whether at home or in France, the employment of women in hospital and canteen work could be 'very materially assisted by bringing them under something like military organisation'.²⁰

The Third Report of the Manpower Distribution Board to the War Committee appeared on 9 November, and for the first time expressed its views on the employment of women.²¹ On the evidence of the Board of Trade Employment Department it had decided that arrangements for the employment of women were generally well organised. The Report continued:

The Board recommend to the favourable consideration of the Army Council a suggestion made by Mrs Charles Furse, Commandant of the V.A.D., for the establishment of a trained corps of volunteer women, under women officers and in uniform, for employment in substitution for men on various subsidiary army services.²²

The Board drew the attention of the War Committee to the fact that the supply of men had become very restricted, and stressed that

'further measures for the direction and control of labour would be necessary to enable labour (both male and female) now engaged on private work, or work not of national importance, to be diverted to National War Service work'.²³

The Report was circulated in order to elicit comments from concerned departments. Montagu suggested that it might be necessary for the principle of compulsion to be introduced, and that extending such a scheme to women should be considered;²⁴ the Board of Trade supported the proposal to establish a corps of women for subsidiary army service.²⁵

A few days later F.H. McLeod from the Board of Trade sent a confidential memo to the Manpower Distribution Board, pointing out that though it was 'urgently necessary' that the further substitution of women for men should be pressed forward, it should be realised that even if unlimited supplies of women were available their employment would not entirely solve the problem of shortage of manpower.²⁶ There were many occupations totally unsuited to women; substitution was proving a slow and lengthy process, and any scheme to be effective within the time required had to be capable of being applied rapidly. It was obvious to the Board of Trade that

any comprehensive re-organisation of the existing manpower of the country must involve a careful scrutiny of the use to which the men now in the Army are put, with a view to securing a maximum proportion for the fighting line. We do not venture to express any opinion upon this most important subject, but may refer to the complaint, repeatedly made by deputations which have appeared before the Reserved Occupations Committee, that men of technical skill or of great physical strength, who are doing valuable work in industry, are taken from their civil occupations and employed on trivial work at camps, hospitals etc. in this country.²⁷

Montagu of the Ministry of Munitions reiterated the Board of Trade's concern that the Army look to its own organisation before calling for more men.²⁸ The Manpower Board should make sure the War Office was using its labour economically; that men fit for active and general service were not being used for services which could be performed by older men 'or even by women' both at home and in France. Montagu asked -

Are they convinced that Man-Power is not wasted in the Army? Is it not true that no trade employs anything like so many fit young men on non-combatant work as the Army does? We are training men and women. Are men and women being trained for skilled work in the Army? Are not men under 41 being used to drive motor lorries, which could be driven by older men? Is not the proportion of combatants and non-combatants in the Army ludicrous? Could not our fighting forces be enormously increased by a combing-out in the Army itself?²⁹

Somewhat bitterly, Montagu remarked that he supposed that the Manpower Board had concluded that the War Office should be the 'sole judge in its own cause' and that it was no use setting up 'impartial tribunals' to interfere in the executive administration of the War Office. But had sauce for the gander yet ceased to be sauce for the goose? Were the Ministry of Munitions and the Admiralty to be interfered with from outside, while the Army Council was to be allowed to administer its own Department?

The *Third Report of the Manpower Distribution Board* was considered at the War Committee Meeting on 21 November, when the question of compulsory industrial service was discussed.³⁰ The Committee concluded that though it would be very desirable to obtain powers by which 'the man-power of the country, even above military age, and perhaps the woman power of the country, could be compelled to undertake the duties for which it was most suited', there were many

problems in allotting people outside the scope of the Military Service Act to national service, because of the existing law, pledges and agreement. But though they could not yet give their final opinion on the subject, it might be necessary to ask Parliament and those to whom pledges had been given, to reconsider. The War Committee approved Paragraph IX - *Employment of Women* - of the Report, and it also approved that further assistance should be given to 'secure the development of the civilian women organisations'.³¹ The initiative in this matter was to rest with the President of the Local Government Board, who would consult with other Departments concerned as necessary.³²

It was at this meeting that those attending the War Committee discussed for the first time Furse's suggestions for a trained, uniformed women's corps, as recommended to the Army Council by the Manpower Distribution Board's *Third Report*.³³ The question of who might head such a Corps was raised. Austen Chamberlain, describing Furse as 'a very capable lady', remarked that he felt sure she would leave the VAD if the War Office asked her. Balfour suggested that Mrs Fawcett was a woman who would be able to find women for employment. Chamberlain insisted that Furse would be the woman to undertake the proposed corps, and pointed out that 'Mrs Fawcett did not forgo politics as much as Mr Balfour seemed to think'. Lloyd George, perhaps ironically, remarked that the two ablest women organisers he knew of were Miss Marshall³⁴ and another lady who organised peace party meetings, but when the Prime Minister asked him if he objected to Mrs Furse, Lloyd George agreed that the latter was a very able

worker. No decision was reached, little more was said on the subject, and the men went on to discuss the question of women taxi-drivers.

Nine days later, on 30 November, the War Committee met at what Hankey described in his diary as an 'Epoch making War Committee', which decided on 'Compulsory National Service for Industry and Agriculture. This is splendid and we may yet win the war hands down, particularly if we adopt foreign labour also'.³⁵ The War Committee concluded:

In view of the serious military situation with which the Allies are confronted in consequence of the levy *en masse* in Germany; the deportation to Germany for labour purposes of the population of the occupied territories; the invasion of Roumania; the difficult financial situation likely to arise in the U.S. of A., and the shortage of merchant shipping and food supplies, the Members of the War Committee were unanimously of opinion that time has come for the adoption of compulsory national service in this country.³⁶

A Committee was appointed to work out the details, including the advisability of extending compulsory national service to incorporate females.³⁷

On 1 December Lloyd George suggested to Asquith that the war should be run by a War Committee greatly reduced in number, that could take decisions without having to refer to the larger Cabinet. Lloyd George himself would take the Chair and Asquith, the Prime Minister, would not be a member. At first Asquith gave in; then he changed his mind, and informed Lloyd George that the system was unworkable. On 4 December Lloyd George resigned, and the following day Asquith went to the King to hand in his resignation. By 7 December the King (on Bonar Law's advice) had asked Lloyd George to form a Ministry. Lloyd George agreed, and the new War Cabinet was established, replacing the unwieldy War Committee. Behind these changes lay the widespread hope

that Lloyd George could run a more efficient and effective war policy than his predecessor.

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When Lloyd George took up his post as Prime Minister, Hankey wrote to him, advising him that the problem of manpower had been reduced practically to two questions: industrial compulsion and foreign labour. The late Minister of Munitions (Montagu) had headed a Committee for drafting a Bill for Compulsory Industrial Service which had been circulated to the War Committee, and the next step seemed to be to complete the labours of the previous body.³⁸ On 14 December the War Cabinet met without Lloyd George, who was unwell, and discussed a draft Bill of National Service.³⁹ It was agreed that a Director of National Service should be appointed, who would be in charge of both the Military and Civil side of Compulsory National Service, but in the Prime Minister's absence the Cabinet decided that no final decision could be made, nor an announcement in regard to the Director until the holder of the post had been nominated. The War Cabinet were in favour of including women in the scheme for Compulsory National Service, though they had been informed that this would affect 14,000,000 women, and would involve the compilation of a new Register. If this step were approved, there should be a Women's Advisory Board attached to the Directorate of National Service, or, alternatively, a third branch of the Directorate, dealing solely with women and presided over by a lady.

On 19 December, with Lloyd George back in the Chair, the War Cabinet approved in principle the adoption of compulsory national service⁴⁰ for all men up to the age of 60 years, but it was agreed

that in the statement to the Houses of Parliament, labour should be given assurance that it would be associated with any organisation it was decided to establish under a Director of National Service, and that no time limit should be fixed for the introduction of compulsion.⁴¹ The Prime Minister in the Commons and Lord Curzon in the Lords were to make it clear that if voluntary effort failed, the Government would ask Parliament to release them from any pledges given on the subject of industrial compulsion, and provide them with adequate powers to make the proposal effective.

Lloyd George was determined to announce the appointment of a Director of National Service immediately. Montagu had been offered the position, but had declined, and it was agreed that Neville Chamberlain, Austen Chamberlain's half-brother, should be approached.⁴² Under pressure, the latter agreed reluctantly to accept.⁴³ In the Commons that afternoon Lloyd George announced the Government's intention to introduce National Service, with a Director of National Service to be in charge of both military and civil sides of 'universal national service' - though the two sides would be kept quite separate, each having its own director.⁴⁴ Lloyd George expressed his conviction that an adequate supply of volunteers would be secured when it was realised how essential it was to the life of the nation 'that the services of every man should be put to the best use'. But if there were not enough volunteers, then they would ask Parliament to release them from pledges and grant them the power necessary to ensure the labour: 'The nation is fighting for its life, and it is entitled to the best services of all its sons'.⁴⁵ The Prime Minister gave no indication what role the nation's daughters might

play in this new effort, but he announced that they had persuaded the Mayor of Birmingham to accept the position of Director General.

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Over the next weeks Neville Chamberlain displayed caution on the question of women's war work, relegating it firmly to second place for his attention. In correspondence with Cecil Harmsworth, Chairman of the Women's War Employment Committee, who had written to inform him of its activities in stimulating the substitution of women for enlisted men, Chamberlain explained that he intended to defer consideration of proposals for utilising the potential capacity of women 'until he had disposed of the more urgent problems arising from the enrolment of male volunteers'.⁴⁶

The Manpower Distribution Board was finally dissolved by the War Cabinet on 10 January 1917, and its functions and archives were transferred to the Director of National Service.⁴⁷ By 13 January Chamberlain had completed his first report, in which he stated that he had examined, as fully as time permitted, the whole question of the requirements and resources of manpower, and he was 'satisfied that the greatest and most urgent requirement is to provide for the Army men who are fit for General Service'.⁴⁸ In order to get the substitutes they needed, it was proposed 'to make a great patriotic appeal for recruits for national service'.⁴⁹ A headquarters staff would be established, co-ordinating the military and civil sections, at St Ermins' in Westminster. The country would be divided into eight divisions (corresponding to the Employment Exchange Division Areas) so that existing State administrative machinery might be used to best advantage. Chamberlain would retain the power to reallocate labour if

necessary, though the actual transference of labour would be effected by the Employment Exchanges, which should be transferred to the National Service Department for the period of the War.⁵⁰ As for women, it was proposed to proceed as soon as possible to organise female labour on lines parallel to the proposals for the men.⁵¹

Though the powers and obligations of the Manpower Distribution Board had already been transferred to the Director General of National Service, Chamberlain considered it necessary for him to be invested with further powers in order that he would be able:

To determine all questions...relating to the organisation, utilisation, and transfer of male and female civilian labour for the purpose of providing the necessary man and woman power for naval and military operations (as authorised from time to time by the War Cabinet) and the continuation and development of industries; to issue Orders and Regulations, and to create the requisite machinery for giving full effect to such determination.⁵²

Chamberlain was requesting power which would have enabled him to settle all questions relating to a Women's Army Corps, and this was just at the time the War Office was beginning to interest itself in the idea of a women's auxiliary Army Corps. Both the Adjutant General, Nevil Macready, and Brigadier General Geddes attended the War Cabinet Meeting on 19 January where Chamberlain's *First Report* was discussed, and certainly would have realised the implications of providing Chamberlain with this kind of authority.⁵³ It is probably no coincidence that from this time the War Office moved rapidly towards establishing its own women's corps.

In his *Report*, Chamberlain had asked that the Employment Exchanges should be transferred to his National Service Department for the period of the war.⁵⁴ At the meeting on 19 January, the War

Cabinet decided, rather, that the Employment Exchanges should remain under the control of the Minister of Labour who 'undertook to place them at the disposal of the Director for the organisation of National Service'.⁵⁵ This directive fostered the discord that existed between the two departments throughout the relatively short existence of the Department of National Service.

Chamberlain wrote despairingly to his sister, Ida, two days later: 'What a *beast* of a time we are all having. The only consolation is that if we didn't we should feel guilty'.⁵⁶ He told Ida that he felt he 'shouldn't last much longer' though he wasn't certain whether he should be sacked or resign - there did not seem to be a third alternative. He reported that he was not going to have a military side at all; he would supply labour to the War Office as to other departments.⁵⁷ The civil side of his scheme had been approved, and, he declared, he was at present on excellent terms with all departments.⁵⁸

11. The Women's Service Committee

During the last months of 1916 public and official concern about how women's war employment should be developed focused on the Manpower Distribution Board and its recommendations, but elsewhere, too, the matter had been under consideration. On 17 November Sir George Newman was asked by Montagu and Addison to chair a Women's Committee.⁵⁹ No public announcement was to be made; the Committee would sit immediately to try and form some opinion as to the general situation of women's voluntary service in regard to canteens, hostels and other welfare agencies for munition workers. Addison wrote to Violet Markham, inviting her to serve on the Women's Committee, and explained that the Ministry of Munitions had been impressed by representations made to them from many quarters about the difficulties existing in connection with an adequate supply of suitable workers for canteens and hostels.⁶⁰ Violet Markham accepted the invitation. The other female members of the Committee included the Lady Amptill, Miss Lillian Clapham of the Board of Trade, Katharine Furse and Mrs H.J. Tennant. In addition to Newman himself, B.S. Rowntree and the Reverend R. Hyde, both of the Welfare Department of the Ministry of Munitions, provided 'the male element'.⁶¹

The Committee's brief was to consider the supply and organisation of women's service, voluntary or otherwise, in canteens, hostels, clubs and other agencies connected with the welfare of munition workers. Between 23 November, and the publication of its Report on 14 December, eleven meetings were held, forty-one witnesses examined, and papers circulated for discussion, the latter produced by

three of the women members, Katharine Furse, Lillian Clapham, and Violet Markham.⁶²

Katharine Furse reiterated her well-publicised view: the Government should set up a Central Women's Department, and a State Service should be started for women. She elaborated her plans to control a women's corps: the selection of women officers as a matter 'of urgent and immediate necessity', and 'Gentlewomen who are considered suitable to act as officers should be given Commissions as in the Army and must be given power to control the women under their care'.⁶³

Miss Clapham expressed the view that the proposed organisation of women's services in canteens and hostels connected with the welfare of munition workers was 'part of a much larger question': the proper organisation and control of the whole of women's work throughout the country. She, too, suggested a Women's Corps, to be recruited through the Employment Department of the Board of Trade.⁶⁴ This would involve little expense, merely requiring a strengthening of the staff of Employment Offices, or where necessary, adding premises.

Violet Markham did not attempt 'an exhaustive examination of the question of Woman Power' but rather, wished to point out the various considerations which should be born^e₁ in mind if a general policy for the organisation of women for war service was to be formulated:

In the first place we may discard the falacious analogies current at the moment of an 'army of women' mobilised alongside an army of men. Military service for men is directed to one simple end - service in the field.

War service for women is concerned with a multiplicity of varied occupations raising industrial and economic issues of a complicated character.⁶⁵

Markham considered that the employment of women divided into two main categories: economic employment, which included the mass of wage earning women in industry, agriculture and commercial occupations, and non-economic employment, in certain State services 'where the profit-making element does not arise'.⁶⁶ State Service of this character was concerned with the substitution of women for men in non-combatant duties connected with the Army or Municipal services. There could only be women industrial and agricultural conscripts (fed, clothed and housed by the State, and paid at a daily rate) if there was State control of both industry and agriculture, and the profits accruing from them both. In Markham's view the first step to be taken in connection with the mobilisation of women for war service was that 'women working in any capacity for the Army should be recruited, disciplined, and controlled on definite lines'.⁶⁷

The sentiments expressed in the three papers illustrated a clash of views between women otherwise united in their belief that something needed to be done about women's war employment. Because of her devotion to military tradition, though she had originally thought of a Corps of women independent of any existing organisation, performing a wide variety of jobs, Katharine Furse came to believe that it was right that there should be separate women's corps, attached to, and modelled on, their male equivalent, and that women should be encouraged to adopt the ethos of the service to which they belonged. She also expressed a belief in conventional hierarchy (though perhaps it was merely a recognition of the inevitable): 'It is of course necessary that the really ultimate control of any Woman's Department should be vested in a man or in the War Office'.⁶⁸ Furse did urge,

though, that there should be women officers between the Welfare Supervisors and the men or department, and that women should have executive and not merely advisory powers; high on her priorities was her concern with keeping women in order. She considered that in any 'great scheme for the organisation of women' Women Police or Women Patrols must have the power to control women:

Until this is done, and as long as the ultimate control of women lies with men, nothing will really be achieved for the prevention of immorality. In every sphere of women's work, men are at present in ultimate control, and they appear invariably to be shy of interfering with the freedom of the citizen, even when the health of a Nation is at stake, and the next generation subjected to avoidable risks.⁶⁹

It was only in hospitals that women were given 'almost full powers', though even there they could not always count upon receiving the support of men on questions of discipline. The Matrons-in-Chief at the War Office and the VAD Principal Commandant in France were given almost full control of their own organisations 'and so long as they did not urge too strongly the necessity for prevention of mischief, and so long as they can control their women quietly and avoid difficulties rather than get rid of them, they are allowed to organise and manage their women as they think necessary'.⁷⁰ But in no other sphere of work was that the case, and if women were to be used *safely* in ever wider spheres, organisation and control had to be put in the hands of women:

It is useless to appoint welfare Supervisors, Inspectors and other women Officers whose reports are ultimately dealt with by men. They should report recommendations through women to women who must be empowered to bring about Reforms.

Welfare of women can only be dealt with by women, and men must give women full powers and trust them.⁷¹

In contrast to Furse, women such as Markham, Tennant, Clapham and Durham strongly opposed the notion of an 'Army' of women, and the

military aspect generally. They viewed the question in wider terms: 'national service' for women, rather than individual Women's Army or Navy Corps, and they grew to dislike the possessive attitudes of some of the women involved in the individual women's Corps.

The *Report of the Women's Service Committee* was issued on 14 December 1916.⁷² In its 'Conclusions' the Committee explained that the representatives of the different societies who had given evidence had talked of the increasing difficulty they had in obtaining voluntary labour - their most capable workers often left for paid work, and voluntary labour had proved unsatisfactory unless it was under proper discipline; therefore the Committee had concluded that voluntary labour in munition canteens was superfluous. But it had not confined itself to munition canteens. With some hesitation, aware that the matter was not within the strict limits of its reference, it had felt obliged, in view of the national emergency, to draw the attention of the authorities to 'certain general considerations' brought to its notice with regard to the employment of women for war purposes, on which the evidence given to the committee had thrown light.⁷³ In addition, members of the Committee were, from personal experience, aware of many aspects of the problem. Facts and statistics showed that large numbers of women were not usefully employed or properly placed: 'it is common knowledge that many women whose activity and energy might be devoted to useful and necessary work of national importance consider themselves sufficiently employed in the entertainment of convalescents and officers on leave'.⁷⁴

If the conclusions reached in the Committee's Report were to be acted upon, they implied the release of a large number of women from

work upon which they had hitherto been occupied. The present lack of co-ordination among existing voluntary societies had led to a considerable amount of overlapping, confusion and waste of effort. At the same time there was a widespread desire among women of all classes and conditions to give their services at the present time. What was needed was more effective organisation and closer co-ordination, and the Committee considered that it was its duty to make certain recommendations on the general question of the employment of women for national purposes in other than industrial, commercial and agricultural work 'of the ordinary economic kind'. A Central Committee or Board should be established to coordinate and control women's labour for public service for the State, independent of any existing Government department, and working in close cooperation with the War Office. This Board should be authorised to enrol women applicants for a State Service, and arrange for their training, placement and control. It should be a small body, consisting of a majority of women, whose principle executive function would be to organise a body of women for whole-time national service, though it would also direct activities of women who could work voluntarily or only part-time.

Violet Markham enlarged on the problems facing women in a letter she wrote while serving as a member of the Women's Service Committee.⁷⁵ Woman Power was 'a big question', which needed thinking about in 'big imaginative lines' if it were to be made a success. At the same time, it was essential that their plans should be limited at first, though potentially expandable into a 'great national organisation'. As long as the State was the employer, and the work

was not profit making, State organisation was relatively simple. But they should not touch ordinary wage earning women - industrial, agricultural or commercial. Any Woman Power Board would obviously keep in close touch with these great groups of employed women but at the start, at least, they must not talk of enrolling or controlling them or they would

...have the whole Labour world by the Ears...Most unfortunately all the women Labour leaders are pacifists and do not care a hang about winning the war or for any of the national interests we have at heart. We cannot expect the smallest help or sympathy from them in our enterprise.

But do not let us provoke their violent and active antagonism at the very start.⁷⁶

Whether or not all women Labour leaders were pacifists, the women who were active in labour politics during the First World War were concerned more with the industrial or commercial employment of women than in the organisation of a women's Army: they do not appear to have objected strongly either to the introduction of the women's corps in general, or to the view that they should be modelled as far as possible on their male counterparts. Some women may have disapproved, but once the women's corps existed, apart from some minor incidents involving trade unions,⁷⁷ there was little trouble. For their part, the women involved in the higher echelons of all three women's auxiliary military services, and in the Women's Section of NSD, were from the upper ranks of society; they were accustomed to the traditional military style and conventional hierarchical structure which the women's corps adopted.

Markham suggested that if it was agreed to start a Woman Power Board to organise a Corps of women to work for the Army, or any other State service, they must try to stir up the War Office in some way,

but she pointed out the difficulties of trying to set up such a corps with no idea of the numbers required. If it was 1,000 - 5,000, there would not be a problem; if, on the other hand, they were talking about 40 - 50,000 women, it was essential to have local organisation. She accepted in theory Furse's views that existing machinery should be used, but her experience of the Labour Exchanges during the War had been a very bitter one: 'The service was hastily got together; it is underpaid, consequently in many cases it is very poor', and the Exchanges were 'astonishingly unpopular among both employers and employed'.⁷⁸ She was filled with misgivings at the prospect of handing over 'these new and delicate duties to an inferior set of people - for bluntly that is the situation'.⁷⁹ At the same time she did not wish to set up a new Registration Agency, for it would be far too expensive. Could they not devise some compromise which used the Exchange machinery for registration but did not 'deliver us bound body and soul into the power of the Board of Trade officials?'⁸⁰ If this was the view of the future Assistant Director of the Women's Section of the National Service Department, it is not surprising that there was trouble between that body and the Employment Exchanges.

But trouble lay in the future. In the immediate present, disappointingly, the Report of the Women's Service Committee made little stir: there was a new Prime Minister, and the very day the Committee's Report was published, the new War Cabinet was deep in discussion about a new National Service Department, which everyone hoped would effectively rationalise the whole man - and woman - power situation.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 5 [Pages 98 to 123]

1. C.F.N.M. Macready, 'War Committee: Agriculture Labour Question' (101D), 29 June 1916, PRO CAB 22/36.
2. 184th Meeting of Army Council, 28 July 1916, PRO WO163/21.
3. Adjutant General Nevil Macready, 'Proposed Establishment of a Manpower Distribution Board', 31 July 1916, PRO CAB 17/156. 105th War Committee, 5 August 1916, PRO CAB 22/40.
4. L.H. (Harcourt), Board of Trade, 'The Proposed Man-Power Distribution Board', 4 August 1916, PRO CAB 17/156.
5. E.S. Montagu, 'Notes for War Committee', 4 August 1916, *ibid.*
6. F.H. McLeod to W.H. Beveridge (Board of Trade), 29 September 1916, LSE BEV IV.9.
7. War Committee Meeting, 22 August 1916, PRO CAB 22/43.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Neville Chamberlain, who was appointed Director General of National Service, described the Manpower Distribution Board as having no executive powers, and noted that its main recommendations were strongly opposed by the Ministry of Munitions and other departments, and not acted upon by the Cabinet. 'History of National Service', NC/BU NC8/5/4/1.
10. 110th Meeting of War Committee, 30 August 1916, PRO CAB 22/45.
11. 113th Meeting of War Committee, 12 September 1916, PRO CAB 22/48. In addition to Chamberlain and Viscount Midleton, the other members of the Manpower Distribution Board were Arthur Balfour, G.N. Barnes, MP and S. Walsh MP.
12. *First Report of Manpower Distribution Board to the War Committee*, 30 September 1916, PRO CAB 17/156 and CAB 22/53 (Appendix 118/c). Printed Paper 118/H. Manpower Distribution Board Memo, 29 September 1916, *ibid.* The Report and Memorandum were discussed at the 118th War Committee Meeting, on 3 October 1916.
13. F.H. Durham, 'Notes on Action taken by the Employment Department in connection with the Employment of Women in Auxiliary Army Services, prior to the appointment of the National Service Department', undated, PRO LAB 2/237/ED40620/30.
14. 'Memorandum of Evidence given at Manpower Distribution Board', Friday 6 October 1916, LSE BEV IV/10.
15. *Report on the Increased Employment of Women*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

16. Typescript initialled F.H.D., 'Note on Substitution of Women and its further extension in connection with utilisation of Manpower', 10 October 1916, LSE BEV IV/9.
17. Appendix I 'Note on Replacement of Women in Army Pay Offices', *ibid.* The Army graded men according to their physical fitness and medical condition; 'C3' was one of the lowest categories, and men so classified were considered unfit for either combatant or non-combatant work in France.
18. In December, 1916, the War Office sent Lt. General Lawson to France to make just such an inspection. See Chapter 6.
19. 'Manpower Distribution Board, Note on Organisation of Women's Labour', unsigned, 11 October 1916, LSE BEV IV/9. The Board of Trade's answer was based on Durham's 'Note'.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Third Report of the Manpower Distribution Board*, 9 November 1916, PRO CAB 17/156. Para IX, *Employment of Women*; See Minutes for 136th Meeting of War Committee, 21 November 1916, PRO CAB 22/71. The *Second Report* was issued on 12 October, and discussed at the War Committee meeting on 17 October, but apart from Lloyd George expressing doubt as to whether the substitution of women for men had been carried out in the shipyards to the same extent for the same classes of work as munitions work, there was no recorded discussion of women's work. 122nd War Committee, 17 October 1916, PRO CAB 22/57.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. E.S. Montagu, Memo for Cabinet; 'Alternative Proposals', 15 November 1916, PRO CAB 17/156. On 14 November Frances Stephenson had commented that David Lloyd George thought that conscription of women was likely in the near future. See p. 77.
25. Board of Trade 'Notes on the Recommendations' [of the Third Report of MPDB], 17 November 1916, p. 3, para 10, PRO CAB 17/156 (136/A4). See also 'Memo on 3rd Report', 14 November 1916, LSE BEV IV/9. The Board of Trade's memo actually stated that they supported the establishment of a 'Trade Corps of Volunteer women'; presumably an error of transcription, as the *Third Report* stated 'trained corps'.
26. F.H. McLeod, Board of Trade to Fawcett, Manpower Distribution Board, 'Memorandum on the existing supply of men available for the Army and Navy, and on the means of increasing it', 21 November 1916, PRO CAB 17/156.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Montagu, 'Notes on Third Report of Manpower Distribution Board', 18 November 1916, PRO CAB 17/156.

29. Ibid.
30. 136th Meeting of War Committee, Tuesday 21 November 1916, PRO CAB 22/71. Appendix 136A, A1 - A4. This meeting was attended by the Prime Minister; McKenna; Grey; Austen Chamberlain; W. Long (President of Local Government Board); Runciman of the Board of Trade; Bonar Law; Lloyd George; Robertson, CIGS; Derby, Permanent Under Secretary of State for War; Lt. General Sir Nevil Macready, Adjutant General; Brig. General A.C. Geddes, Director of Recruiting for the War Office.
31. Ibid.
32. Local Government records do not reveal what action, if any, was taken by the Local Government Board to implement this recommendation.
33. Handwritten record of meeting of War Committee, 21 November 1916, 'Employment of Women', PRO CAB 22/71.
34. See Appendix VII for biographical notes about Catherine Marshall. Marshall is described as 'a prime mover behind the setting up of the international Women's Committee for Permanent Peace', which had culminated in the Hague Women's Peace Conference of 1915. Kamester and Vellacott, *Militarism versus Feminism: Writings on Women and War*, op. cit., frontispiece. Perhaps Lloyd George wanted to distract Miss Marshall from her work with the peace movement.
35. M. Hankey, Diary, 30 November 1916, Churchill College, Hankey Papers 1/1. See also 143rd War Committee, 30 November 1916, PRO CAB 22/78.
36. Ibid.
37. Draft Conclusions, War Committee, 30 November 1916, ibid.
38. M. Hankey to Lloyd George, 8 December 1916, PRO CAB 22/81.
39. War Cabinet Meeting, 14 December 1916, WC7, pp. 20 - 23; PRO CAB 23/1.
40. Dilks points out that at the time that Neville Chamberlain took up his post, the term "national service" 'had both a wider and a smaller significance' than its common meaning of conscription for the armed forces: 'To strike a balance between the needs of the forces, the demand for munitions, the claims of agriculture and the home economy, was a task of the utmost complexity and political sensitivity...To the trade unions, conscription meant much more than liability for military service; it might bring the direction of labour by the state'. David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain, Vol. 1, 1869 - 1929*, pp. 199 - 200.
41. War Cabinet, 19 December 1916, PRO CAB 23/1.

42. Neville Chamberlain, son of Joe Chamberlain, was at this time Mayor of Birmingham.
43. In his diary, Neville Chamberlain describes how he was boarding a train to return to Birmingham when he was stopped by a messenger from Lloyd George, and asked if he would become Director General of National Service. Neville Chamberlain, Political Diary 1913 - 1922, 16 January 1917, NC/BU NC 2/30. See also Dilks, op. cit., pp. 190 - 1. When he finally saw Lloyd George, he was given just ten minutes to decide whether or not to accept the offer. He told his sister that he knew he would have to do it as soon as he learned what was wanted, 'but oh I was sick'. Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 24 December 1916, NC/BU NC18/1/95.
44. 88 H.C. Deb. 5s, 19 December 1916, Cols. 1351 - 3.
45. Ibid.
46. Correspondence between Cecil Harmsworth and Neville Chamberlain between 23 December 1916 and 2 January 1917, and between A. Collins and Harmsworth, 5 January 1917. File W/100, PRO NATS 1/78.
47. War Cabinet Meeting, 10 January 1917, Para 13, p. 96, PRO CAB 23/1.
48. *First Report by the Director General of National Service to the War Cabinet*, 13 January 1917, (N.S.R.1) PRO CAB 1/22/16.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., para 14, p. 6.
51. Ibid., para 20, p. 6.
52. Ibid., para 21, p. 6.
53. War Cabinet Meeting 39, 19 January 1917, PRO CAB 23/1, 115B(1). In his *Second Report* of 3 February, at the suggestion of the War Cabinet, Chamberlain rewrote para 21 of his *First Report*, defining the role of the Department of National Service: 'It rests with the Director-General of National Service to assign to their proper places in industry, occupation or service all men and women who are available for the purpose, whether they are available voluntarily or whether they are available by means of any direct or indirect form of compulsory power...The Director-General, will as respects any work, occupation or service which is controlled by any other Government Department, work in co-operation with the Dept., but the ultimate responsibility for the allocation of any men or women available remains with him, and it follows that his final decision on the matter must govern the action of the Department, and that no Department should enter into any engagement affecting the organisation, supply or distribution of labour or other man or woman power in any other Department without consultation with him'. *Second Report*, 3

February 1917, War Cabinet 55, 5 February 1917, (Appendix II, para 21), PRO CAB 23/1. On 9 February the War Cabinet approved the above definition of the powers of the Director General, and it is apparent that the powers provided should have ensured that the National Service Department would be consulted about the organisation of any women's corps to be established. War Cab. 59, 9 February 1917, para 14, PRO CAB 23/1.

54. *First Report by Director General of National Service to War Cabinet*, para 15, op. cit.
55. War Cab 39, 19 January 1917, para iv. op. cit.
56. Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 21 January 1917, NC/BU, NC 18/1/98.
57. Neville Chamberlain told his sister Hilda that he had not wanted Auckland Geddes as his Chief of Staff 'for reasons which I will tell you some day'. Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 27 January 1917, NC/BU NC18/1/99. This is probably why Chamberlain was determined to exclude a military directorate from the National Service Department, though in fact he had already announced that Auckland Geddes would be the Military Director.
58. Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 21 January 1917, op. cit.
59. Sir George Newman of the Board of Education and Canteen Committee. Newman to A.B. Cane, 18 November 1916, PRO HO185/258. This Committee had its roots in the resolution adopted by the Canteen Committee, back in July 1916. See pp. 90 - 1.
60. Christopher Addison, Ministry of Munitions, to Violet Markham, 17 November 1916, LSE Markham 4/11.
61. Newman referred to 'a male element' in his letter to Cane, 19 November 1916, op. cit.
62. Witnesses called to speak to the Committee included Mrs Winston Churchill for the YMCA; Rev. Edward Rainbow for the Church Army; Sir Edward Ward, Chairman of the Committee on Voluntary Organisation, and the Countess of Bessborough, representing YMCA hut work. Minutes of Meetings of Committee for the Organisation of Women's Service, LSE Markham 4/10.
63. Katharine Furse, 'Circulated Paper No. 1, Committee on Women's Service', 24 November 1916, PRO HO 185/258.
64. Miss L. Clapham, 'Circulated Paper No. 2, Committee on Women's Service', 27 November 1916, *ibid*.
65. Violet Markham, 'Notes on Organisation of Women Power, Circulated Paper No. 3', Committee on Women's Service, 1 December 1916, *ibid*.

66. Violet Markham, 'Suggestions for the Organisation of Women under the Director General of National Service', undated, IWM EMP 15/5.
67. Markham, 'Notes on Organisation of Women Power', op. cit.
68. Katharine Furse, Memo, 2 December 1916, IWM EMP 15/20.
69. Katharine Furse, 'Memorandum of Women Power', 4 November 1916, LSE Markham 4/11.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. *Report of Women's Service Committee*, 14 December 1916, PRO HO185/258 and WO 162/30.
73. *Report of Women's Service Committee*, ibid., p. 6. Sir George Newman explained to one witness that the Committee took the view that there were two points in its reference: first, to consider how many women were being used in Welfare Service at the present time, and of what type and qualifications, and secondly, whether there was work being undertaken by men in connection with the National Service that ought to be undertaken by women. Friday 8 December, 1916, Minutes of Meeting of Committee for Organisation of Women's Service, LSE Markham 4/10.
74. *Report of Women's Service Committee*, op. cit.
75. Violet Markham, 7 December 1916, LSE Markham 4/11.
76. Ibid.
77. See Chapter 10, pp.
78. Markham, 7 December 1916, op. cit.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

THE FORMATION OF THE WOMEN'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS

I. Army Attitudes

In contrast to the efforts of the Manpower Distribution Board and other Government departments to persuade the Army to rationalise its existing manpower, within the Army itself there was pressure to increase it. According to General Sir Douglas Haig, in November 1916 the infantry deficiency stood at 113,000; 300,000 men would be required in France before the end of the following March, and a total of 1½ million should be provided for next year's operations.¹ If these numbers were not forthcoming, the success of his 1917 operations would be seriously jeopardised. On a visit to London near the end of November, Haig was assured by the Adjutant General that 1½ million men would be found for him during the coming months.²

Back in France once more, Haig received a letter from the Assistant Secretary to the Army Council, B.B. Cubitt, who pointed out (in response to earlier criticism by Haig) that steps had been taken, at the expense of forces other than those under Haig's command, to ensure he would receive 150,000 Infantry before 1 January 1917 and that by March the total of 300,000 would have reached him.³ But while reassuring Haig on this matter, the Army Council insisted that the Army in France make every effort to replace physically fit men by those of lower standards in the areas behind the Armies, 'and that not a single man is employed out of the fighting area unless his services are absolutely necessary'.⁴ To help Haig achieve this, the Army

Council had decided to send out a Senior Officer to consider the release of personnel in administrative services and non-combatant employment generally who were suitable for the fighting line, by the substitution of other men not so suitable. There was no mention in this letter to Haig that women might also be used as substitutes for men.

Sometime between the end of November and 4 December 1916 the Army Council reached the decision that it was time to consider using women in France, out of the fighting area.⁵ According to the *History of the Directorate of Organisation during the First World War*, it was towards the end of 1916, 'owing to the pressing need of securing more men to replace casualties', that the Army Council decided to extend the employment of women with the Army, by 'replacing men in certain categories of employment with women', thus releasing fit men on non-combatant duties to serve with fighting Units.⁶ On 4 December the Secretary to the War Office wrote to Haig, asking him to consider the possibility of using women as substitutes for men in certain areas behind the lines in France.⁷ On 10 December Haig replied that he was 'prepared to accept the principle of employment of women in substitution of men as clerks in certain offices at General Headquarters and on the Lines of Communication'.⁸ He also agreed that as an initial measure the office of the Director General of Transportation should be staffed with some women, and reported that they were already taking steps to see how many women could be employed there, and would let the Army Council know as soon as possible.⁹

On 7 December, GHQ in France was informed that Lieutenant General H.M. Lawson would arrive in Boulogne in two days time, to

examine the numbers and physical categories of men employed outside the fighting areas, and that he was to give an account of his investigation to both Haig and the Army Council.¹⁰ Haig's diary entry for 10 December records that the Adjutant General had brought Lawson, affectionately nicknamed 'Wise Bob', to see him.¹¹ At a meeting held a few days after Lawson's arrival, it was agreed that the various Services and Departments should prepare their own statements to show what men could be replaced by women without impairing the efficiency of the services concerned.¹²

In certain areas French women were already working for the British Army; for example, at the Ordnance Department in Havre.¹³ But Lt. Col. J. Baker, the Chief Ordnance Officer at Base HQ Rouen, reported on 30 January that he had attended a conference at HQ with the French, on the subject of civilian labour, and French officers had opposed the British employment of French civil labour, and asked when the 7,000 odd currently employed could be dispensed with.¹⁴ Baker did not mention whether this embargo applied also to female French civilians working for the British Army, but it probably did, and would have encouraged the Army in France to look to British women as replacements.

The comments recorded by the officers in France in their War Diaries indicate that the idea of women replacing men was accepted by those in command, at least, with equanimity - though it was discussed in terms of 'female labour' or 'women workers', rather than a Women's Army Corps. Women's suitability for certain jobs was occasionally questioned. Lt. Col. Baker observed that General Lawson had thought train checkers could be replaced by women; he himself had not included

them as he thought the long hours and exposure to weather made the job unsuitable for women.¹⁵

On being told of the plan to bring women to France, the Quarter-master General in France wrote to the various Directorates, informing them that in view of the difficulty of meeting all demands for Manpower now being put forward, the 'Home Authorities' had suggested the possibility of substituting women for men as clerks in certain rear services of the Army in France; the proposal had been accepted in principle, and the main difficulty lay in the provision of suitable accommodation.¹⁶ He stated: 'The intention is to form a definitely organised corps of women clerks, under officers with women cooks etc. The Corps would be in every way a military organisation, the members being suitably uniformed and equipped'.¹⁷ Sections were asked to consider the proposal, and submit a list detailing the number of women clerks they thought might be employed, and the number of men clerks who would thereby be released. The QMG's own office reported that 15 women could be employed to release 10 men; the Department of Transport needed 263 women to release 212 men and the Ordnance Directorate estimated 439 women to replace 351 men. Altogether, the QMG estimated that his department could employ some 899 women.

In a confidential memo to the War Office Eric Geddes, Director General of Transportation, expressed his view as to why it was necessary to provide an excess in numbers of women over Establishment.

I have had considerable experience, personally, in the employment of women on clerical labour, and have, further, conducted a considerable amount of investigation into the relative value of female labour compared with a corresponding number of men, and in civil life the question of the employment of female clerks has been of considerable importance to me. Roughly speaking, in civil life it takes 10% to 12% more women to do the work of male clerks. They cannot stand the long hours which men will work, nor can they stand times of extreme

pressure extending over a period of weeks. Further, the proportion of them who are off work for minor complaints is greater than is the case with men.¹⁸

If women were to be introduced on any large scale in France, bearing in mind the rougher conditions and exposure to weather in a camp such as his, Geddes believed there needed to be something like 20% more women than there were presently men. It had been estimated that about 80 men could be replaced by about 96 women in the various Directorates, with additional women to be responsible for administrative and disciplinary matters. In Geddes's experience, women clerks were 'less adaptable and less generally useful than men'; but he was prepared to take 96 women clerks, provided the technical nature of their duties in his Directorate was recognised, and that he was given the right to select them at home. If the women could not be specially selected, he would need to revise his estimate of the number he could use. In conclusion, Geddes suggested that 'while the women would presumably be enlisted for the duration of the War, it should be part of the terms of enlistment that there was a right on the part of the War Office to dispense with their services on giving a month's notice at any time, but that no right of terminating the engagement on the part of the women should be given'.¹⁹

By 12 January Haig had informed the War Office that the Paymaster in Chief could employ 500 women clerks in his offices, in batches of 100 at a time, to commence towards the end of January.²⁰ The Pay Offices were about to move from Rouen to Wimereux, where there would be no difficulties with regard to accommodation or hospital arrangements for the women. A few days later he wrote again, about

the possibility of employing women as Telegraphists and Telephone Exchange Operators in certain Signal Offices in France, and asked that an officer from the Postmaster General's Department be sent out to France to advise on the necessary numbers.²¹

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On 20 December, the Adjutant General suggested to Sir John Cowans, that now there had been a public announcement 'of the intention of the Government to place the human resources of the Empire on an organised basis',²² they should at once consider the question of the employment of women in regard to the Army. There were several groups currently engaged in the matter, but there was 'little cohesion, probably much overlapping and no doubt a good deal of misdirected energy'.²³ Macready recommended that women's service in medical areas should be left under its existing organisation; he was concerned with the women employed as cooks, drivers and clerks. He had heard from France that an application for a large number of women to be sent there would soon be made. This would entail arrangements for their accommodation and feeding; Macready considered

that the time has...arrived when there should be some small central body in the War Office to deal with the whole question of women labour employed by the Army in any capacity whatever. I see no reason why the women should not be organised in units and formations, and from that point of view I should be prepared to take it up. A small Committee of three or four, certainly no more than four, composed say of two men and two women, should be formed in the War Office to deal with the whole question.²⁴

Macready disapproved of the manner in which women clerks were currently obtained:

I believe that unless a woman is the daughter or widow of an officer she is unable to obtain a position in [the] War Office, except through the Labour Exchange. This [I happen] to know from personal experience is a most unsatisfactory arrangement, and I think it would be far better if [we had] our own supply

direct from the newly appointed [Department of National Service] who no doubt will remedy the [situation with the] present Labour Exchange.²⁵

A conference on 'The Organisation of Women employed by the Army (in connection with Compulsory Service)' was held on 5 January 1917; it is the first recorded discussion at the War Office about employing a corps of women in the Army. Eleven men and one woman (Mrs Leach of the Women's Cookery and Housekeeping Section of the Women's Legion) attended, and the Adjutant General invited them to put forward their views with regard to the organisation of women employed in the Army, with the specific exclusion of the Nursing Services.²⁶ He told them that so far there had been no difficulty getting 'the right class' of woman; now there was a danger that departments would start competing against each other. He wanted a decision as to whether it was necessary to form a small body to cope with the 'Women's question', who could advise the Army Council on general rules and regulations. He insisted that if they got women from the Women's Legion 'they should belong more or less to the Army',²⁷ and he observed that a man was deunionised the moment he came into the Army; neither his trade union nor any other outside organisation, could have the least control over him.²⁸

No objection was made to Macready's suggestion that the Director of Women should be under the Director of Organisation at the War Office, nor to his comment that 'We can treat them [women] as Soldiers'. Mrs Leach insisted that women were anxious 'to be under every sort of Army discipline, to take the place of soldiers as far as possible'. She pointed out that there were already two women at the head of sections of women: she herself was Head of Cookery, and Miss

Ellis headed the Motor Section. On this occasion, nothing was resolved, and a second meeting was arranged, to which General Woodward, the Director of Organisation at the War Office, was invited.²⁹ This time, two more women were present: Miss Ellis of the Motor Drivers' Section and Mrs Mapplebeck of the Clerks' Section.³⁰ Again, little progress was made, apart from an agreement being reached that as part of the Civil Service, War Office and Audit Office female clerks would remain outside any Army organisation for women. It was assumed that some kind of compulsory service for women would be introduced in the near future. The question of the contract or agreement under which women would serve until such compulsory legislation was introduced was discussed; it was agreed that an identical form should be used for all sections, and yet another meeting was arranged for 15 January.³¹

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II. Lt. General Lawson's Report

The meeting on 15 January was chaired by General Woodward, who announced that the Adjutant General was not satisfied with the way women had been employed in the War Office to date; he did not want them to be paid too low a rate: he wanted good, well-paid employees, and the inferior ones must be 'sorted out'.³² They would 'take them [women] on similarly to a soldier' and 'regularise the whole thing'. A discussion about the kind of obligation women would be under to remain with the Army prompted Miss Ellis of the Women's Legion Motor Transport section to insist that women taken on by the Army would like to feel that they were 'more or less soldiers'; similarly, Mrs Leach reiterated her view that her women were 'willing to sign anything',

that what they wanted was to be soldiers, to take the place of a man in every sense.³³

It was agreed that the new organisation should be called 'The Women's Army Service Department', and that one of the rules embodied in the enrolment form would be that women should serve for a specified period (for twelve months or the duration of the War) and that an appropriate Defence of the Realm Regulation should be drafted. Woodward wrote immediately to the Adjutant General, informing him of the proposal to set up a new department, to be called the Women's Army Service, and suggested that in order to co-ordinate the new corps it would be necessary to form a new branch within the Adjutant General's department.³⁴

The publication on 16 January of Lt. General Lawson's *Report 'On the Number and Physical Categories of Men Employed out of the Fighting Area in France'* altered the attitude of the Adjutant General to the proposed women's department.³⁵ Lawson explained that the purpose of his visit to France had been to impress on the heads of Services the importance of releasing Category 'A' men for the front. In his view, economy could be effected in a number of ways: by the substitution of lower physical categories in men, and replacement of men by women or juveniles; by introduction of coloured for white labour; by changes in organisation and by the introduction of labour-saving devices.³⁶

Lawson emphasised that if women were to be employed, there were advantages in introducing them on as large a scale as possible. He believed that the rearward services should set an example of the economical use of manpower, and that in such circumstances men should not be doing work which women could do: 'It does not look well, nor is

it fair on the men themselves, to have quantities of men in khaki doing work which all over England is being done by the other sex'.³⁷

There were opportunities to employ women in many sections: Royal Engineers; Signal Service; Army Service Corps and Ordnance. As far as the Royal Army Medical Corps on the Lines of Communication were concerned, women should be employed as much as possible in both General and Stationary Hospitals. Lawson commented on the fact that the question of replacing 'A' men by 'B' men and women in Hospitals on the Lines of Communication had been considered and discarded some time ago, for a number of reasons, including the belief that in times of stress women would not be able to bear the strain, and there was a good deal of heavy, rough work more suited to men than women. Lawson protested: 'Whatever weight these considerations may have had in the past it is lessened now by the present need for men and there seems no reason whatever why these Hospitals should not have a considerably larger proportion of women than at present'. Lawson pointed out that in the past year or so in England the employment of women had developed to an immense extent because of lack of men, and had been remarkably successful, with women taking up forms of male employment previously deemed impossible for their sex. In the Army at Home women already worked in numerous offices, cooked in Military Establishments and 'Results have shown that the sex difficulty has not been anything like what some have predicted. The women have been hard at work and felt they were out for the job and the men have respected them'.³⁸

Lawson also believed that sending out women to work in France would have a beneficial effect on Britain's allies. It would show that both sexes were taking their share in the struggle, and that the

nation was leaving no means untried to add to its fighting forces. Of course, certain precautions and considerable organisation were necessary: women would have to be carefully selected, housed, cared for, and form part of definite units, with women officers and N.C.O.s. Such matters as grading, rates of pay, conditions of engagement and service (whether voluntary or obligatory); uniform, leave; all would have to be settled beforehand, and there appeared to be advantage in having a uniform of some other colour than khaki - perhaps blue. It was important that within the unit women should be administered and dealt with for all purposes by their own officers and not by 'the other sex'. The class of women would have to be suited to the various employments: 'ambulance and motor car drivers, clerks, storemen, checkers, stewards in hospitals and others, and those who work with their heads will naturally be chosen from the better and educated classes, whereas the cooks, waiters, charwomen, will come from a different stratum'.³⁹

Lawson detailed his own ideas of how a women's corps could be organised, and the steps necessary to put them into practice, if the principle of women labour in France were approved, and he suggested that if his recommendations were followed, 26,000 'A'men on the Lines of Communication could be released, to be replaced by a total of 12,100 women.⁴⁰

After Lawson's first visit to the Lines of Communication, Haig had suggested that he should also visit the Armies to see what economies in manpower could be made there. Lawson's conclusions from this investigation were similar to his first, and appeared in a second report, published in early February.⁴¹ Again, he recommended a

rigorous combing out of men and replacement by women in the Army Service Corps and Army Ordnance Corps, and possibly in other establishments in England, and the employment of French women in Army Ordnance Workshops. He reported that he was told repeatedly that fit men of military age should be entirely reserved for the fighting services, and had his attention drawn to young men in the Army Service Corps and Army Ordnance Corps who should be fighting in the trenches.⁴²

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After reading Lawson's *Report*, Nevil Macready paid more attention to the proposed women's organisation. He wrote to Lord Derby, explaining that since he had first looked at the question of the employment of women for the Army, Lt. General Lawson had sent in his *Report on the Lines of Communication in France*, in which he recommended the employment of 12,100 women.⁴³ Lawson had included a great many more services than Macready had originally had in mind; this altered his conception of the whole scheme. Macready now suggested that the question of the employment of women in the Army was too large to throw upon the Director of Organisation, whose branch was already overworked. There was another problem: from different sources he had had numerous reports of an agitation which was being engineered by those who ran various women's organisations throughout the country. In each case he had replied that the matter was still under consideration:

My own opinion is that if women are to be employed in the Army, they should be part and parcel of the Army, and entirely distinct from any outside organisation, in exactly the same way as the Territorial and Reserve Nurses are as much a component part of the Army as the Regular Army Nurses. If we once admit

outside interference, jealousy will be created among the various organisations, and I feel sure there will be no peace.⁴⁴

Macready suggested that a separate women's branch, under a senior officer (possibly Lieutenant General Lawson himself) should be established in the War Office, with a selected lady in charge of each section, who, through the [male] Officer at the head of the branch could 'advise' the Army Council as to the rules and regulations necessary for the efficiency and well-being of the women under her charge. He continued:

There is, so far as I can see no objection to the ladies who have experience in outside organisations being consulted in the first instance, before the scheme is launched, in order that we may have the benefit of their advice, but I strongly urge that the War Office Organisation should be entirely free from them, and I would also deprecate any consultative committee other than the selected heads of sections, when once the scheme has been launched.⁴⁵

Lord Derby agreed in the main with the Adjutant General's proposals, but he was anxious 'not to give outside associations of women an opportunity for agitation'.⁴⁶ He suggested inviting a certain number of ladies who were interested in women's work to help in the selection of the female heads of the various branches, as well as the general rules for the corps. But: 'Once we have got those ladies selected, and the general rules laid down, I am entirely with you as to resisting any outside interference whatsoever'.⁴⁷

Derby proposed to invite suitable women to a meeting at the War Office at the end of January, and he suggested that the Women's Legion, who had 'done us very well', should be asked to nominate heads for the two branches which they already ran.⁴⁸ The meeting in January was cancelled because Derby was unwell, but on Tuesday, 6 February, a 'Women's Conference' finally took place.⁴⁹

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III. Women's Reaction

Outside the War Office, no-one had much idea what was happening about the new Women's Army service. In an effort to find out what - if anything - was going on, Katharine Furse inquired of Sir Reginald Brade, the Secretary of the War Office, if he would think it very impertinent of her if she asked what was being proposed with regard to the organisation of women for the dilution of the Army, and whether it would come under the War Office or directly under Mr Neville Chamberlain?⁵⁰ There were so many wild rumours and, as she was frequently asked for information, it would be much more satisfactory if she could know the actual facts. She emphasised her long-standing interest in the topic, and told Brade that she had already offered to help Chamberlain with the new organisation for women, commenting modestly that 'they probably have other ladies upon whom they can depend...'. She would consider it 'most friendly' of Brade if he would trust her with a definite answer to stop the gossip.

Brade's reply was curt: he had spoken to the Adjutant General; he was not yet able to announce the plan he hoped to have approved, though he thought it would be ready the following week.⁵¹ Brade also pointed out that the Adjutant General had already corresponded on the subject with Mrs Furse. Undeterred, Furse responded at length to Brade's attempt to discourage further enquiry. The only correspondence she had had with the Adjutant General, she pointed out indignantly, was a letter of 20 December 1916, which told her that a 'Scheme for the Organisation of Women' was before the Army Council, and her reply of 26 December, offering to help if her experience was

of any use - to which she had as yet had no acknowledgement.⁵² Women everywhere were most concerned to hear that ladies had already been appointed to control the new Scheme at the War Office, for it had been done without the advice of experienced and competent women as to terms and conditions of service. If anything definite were done without consulting such people as Miss Durham, Miss Clapham, Mrs Tennant, Miss Markham, and others in whom women believed, there would be nothing but opposition: 'The dilution of the Army by women can only be successfully carried out if the whole Mother wit of women be brought to bear on it. It is a question which affects the good name of Women to such an extent that the experienced leaders are united in wishing to co-operate for the efficient carrying out of the Scheme'.⁵³

Furse complained that it would show very little appreciation of the work of the VADs if none of their officers were invited to help with work they were 'so eminently fitted to perform'. She apologised for writing so insistently, but it was only fair to warn him of what she knew was happening. It was generally believed that the War Office had decided to send thousands of women to France almost immediately: that caused an immense amount of anxiety from all points of view, and they were being besieged from all directions for information about the scheme.⁵⁴

Others, too, were bothered about the rumours that the War Office intended to employ women on a large scale. C.F. Rey, a colleague of Frances Durham's in the Employment Department of the Board of Trade, wrote to Auckland Geddes, the Director of Recruiting, and asked if they could discuss the matter in order that the Employment Exchanges might be utilised for the purpose of recruiting women; he received no

reply.⁵⁵ The fact was that neither the Army Council nor the Adjutant General yet knew exactly *what* they were going to do. That the Army in France was keen to have the women was not in doubt - requests for their services were pouring in; but how best to organise large numbers of women, in different sections of the Army, was more difficult to decide.

Suffragists were worried about the War Office plans. Mrs Fawcett and three other women wrote to the Prime Minister and Lord Derby, expressing their concern about the 'apprehension felt by so many women lest serious mistakes should be made through lack of preliminary organisation'.⁵⁶ There were rumours that the War Office had in mind a scheme to employ women in large numbers to replace men in the non-combatant work of the Army at home in France, and though the proposal was 'one which cannot but meet with the whole-hearted support of patriotic women at this time', it was clear there were grave dangers attendant upon it, and its success would depend upon the manner in which it was carried out. In planning such a scheme, the experience of women used to working with, and being responsible for, other women was essential; from the very beginning use must be made of the services of 'women of proved capacity and judgement'. In the circumstances, they wanted to draw attention to 'the very general uneasiness occasioned among women who hear the making of these appointments will be left entirely to men, however distinguished these men may be'.⁵⁷ They suggested that a small Board of women should be set up, and enclosed a list of possible members; their concern was that the planning, selection, discipline and control of women working for the Army be made by women, and especially the 'exceptionally able

women already employed by the Government, as well as some of those whose voluntary service has been notably efficient'.⁵⁰

Discussions about the proposed corps of women for the Army coincided with the re-emergence of the debate on another matter of crucial concern to many women: it was the latter to which suffragists turned their attention. On 17 January the *Evening News* reported that on this, the last day of the Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform, women were demonstrating outside the House of Commons, carrying boards demanding 'votes for all'. By the end of the month the Recommendations of the Conference had been published, including the decision that some measure of woman suffrage should be conferred.⁵¹ This drew an immediate response: Mrs Pankhurst criticised the proposal to limit the age of women voters (the majority considered it should be restricted to those of 30 or 35) and she called for voting equality. Mrs Strachey⁵² was reported as saying that though they were very disappointed that the conference hadn't recommended woman suffrage unanimously, it was better than nothing: 'They seem frightened of women, and their proposals are timid'.⁵³

On 20 February Mrs Fawcett presided at what was described as 'the first purely suffrage gathering' convened by the NUWSS since the outbreak of war, held at the Queen's Hall, London, to consider the question of franchise reform.⁵⁴ One of the speakers at this NUWSS meeting was MP Walter Runciman, ex-President of the Board of Trade, who, after moving a Resolution welcoming the *Report* of the Speaker's Conference, quoted Lord Kitchener's remarks that 'England will not put forth her full strength until women are doing nearly everything now done by men'.⁵⁵ As far as Runciman knew, Kitchener was the first of

'our leading men' to realise that fact. In her speech, Mrs Fawcett declared that women suffragists maintained that men alone, in peace as in war, could not maintain the State: it must be the joint work of men and women. This had come as a revelation to many former anti-suffragists who had become their friends since the war. The terms suggested for Women's Suffrage at the Speaker's Conference fell short of the 'plain and simple equality' they had always asked for, but they must still urge the Government to introduce a Bill without delay, containing the provisions for enfranchisement of women as an integral part.⁶⁴

The formation of a women's army corps was a clear indication of the extent of women's participation in what had been a man's world; in the circumstances, could anyone have seriously argued that women should not have the vote?⁶⁵

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From No. 8 Gower Street - just a few doors away from Mrs Fawcett, who lived at No. 2 - Violet Markham wrote to Lloyd George, expressing sentiments similar to those of the suffragists. She complained that 'Two ladies (unknown to me previously by name) have I understand been appointed to carry out this work'.⁶⁶ Enclosing a copy of the *Report of the Women's Service Committee*,⁶⁷ Markham pointed out its recommendation for the formation of a corps of women for state service. The Committee had 'devoted considerable thought and attention' to the question, and they had hoped government action might be taken on the lines they had suggested, with the creation of a Central Committee or Board composed of women. She appealed to the Prime Minister not to allow an independent organisation to spring up

at the War Office without reference to Neville Chamberlain's department, or any consultation with the head women officials in the Government service and other experienced women workers. Markham believed that a woman's corps, properly thought out, would render invaluable service, but she feared 'a real national scandal if the organisation falls into unsuitable or inexperienced hands'.⁶⁸ A 'sectional appeal' to women to join a corps made without any regard to the general question of women's employment, or the claims of munitions, industry and agriculture, would both 'prejudice and confuse a question with which it was hoped Mr Chamberlain would deal on properly co-ordinated lines'.⁶⁹

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IV. *Women's Section, National Service Department*

For some weeks after the announcement of the formation of the National Service Department, the role of women in the new scheme remained a mystery. The headlines on the front page of the *Daily Express* on January 18 must have quickened the pulse of women such as Katharine Furse: 'ARMY OF WOMEN ON A MILITARY BASIS!'; but it was misleading: it referred to an organisation of agricultural workers, not a women's Army Corps. The War Office had released details of a scheme under which 50% of unexempted agricultural workers classed as C3 (sedentaries) were being called to the colours immediately. In a speech to farmers, Mr Prothero, the President of the Board of Agriculture, said he believed that he would get the women required if he told them that they should be billeted and uniformed like soldiers. His appeal was aimed especially at the 'educated women of the towns: 'Come out and work in the trenches of your native land on precisely the same terms as your brothers are getting in France'.⁷⁰

When the *Daily Express* learned of Neville Chamberlain's plans for 'the mobilisation of a new industrial army' [to call on all men from 18 to 60 to offer their services voluntarily to the nation] it criticised not only the voluntary basis of the scheme, but the fact that 'The enormous woman-power of the nation is to be absolutely ignored'.⁷¹ The paper claimed that all that was being set up was a special department to arrange for women's enrolment should the necessity arise. The manpower scheme was condemned as 'another attempt at compromise...the old business of voluntary enlistment over again'. The omission of women was a 'serious blunder...to enrol men of 60 and ignore healthy women of 30 is to show a curious Victorian

belief in the physical superiority of men'.⁷² Neville Chamberlain, commenting on the announcement of his scheme in the press, wrote to his sister Hilda that two papers had 'strafed' it - *The Express*, and *The Evening News* - the latter finding two 'fatal blunders': it was not compulsory and women were completely ignored.⁷³ Chamberlain remarked that the former was not his affair, and that the latter was untrue.

After a visit from Colonel F. Earl from the War Office, Major Reginald Reynolds at the newly formed National Service Department suggested to Arthur Collins, Secretary of NSD, that he draw the attention of Neville Chamberlain to the 'Scheme' that the War Office apparently now had in hand, for the enrolment of 100,000 women.⁷⁴ Reynolds claimed that 12,000 women were required to proceed to France as soon as possible. If the Director General of National Service proposed to deal with Women Volunteers, this scheme should be run from the beginning by NSD: 'There is no doubt that the proposal to put this 100,000 women into Uniform will be very attractive to a great portion of the women of England, so that if this Scheme were brought in separately to any Mr Chamberlain proposes to bring in, his scheme would be materially affected'.⁷⁵

Perhaps the threat of competition galvanised it into action, for on the day that Major Reynolds wrote to Collins, NSD announced 'that a general scheme for the utilisation of the woman power of the country will be made public in the near future'.⁷⁶ According to the *Daily Express*, though Chamberlain was initially concentrating on completing the scheme for dealing with manpower, an organisation for dealing with woman power was already under formation. The Director General anticipated that two or three million women would volunteer for work,

and he announced that a scheme for placing them in work of national importance had been submitted to the Cabinet.⁷⁷ Mrs Oliver Strachey of the London Society for Women's Suffrage was quoted, insisting that the work of organising the woman power of the nation should be entrusted to women: 'The more one considers every phase of employment of large numbers of women, the more important it seems that the whole question should be handled by women, who understand its complexities more clearly than men can possibly do'.⁷⁸

At the beginning of February, under triumphant headlines 'Women Directors of Woman-Power', the establishment of a Women's Department in the Department of National Service was announced. It would be based at St Ermin's Hotel, and Mrs H.J. Tennant, wife of the former Under Secretary of State for War, and sister-in-law of Mrs Asquith, was appointed Director; Miss Violet Markham, 'a leader in the ranks of Liberal women, an ardent worker for social reform...and an anti-suffragist' was to be Assistant Director.⁷⁹

The response to the announcement underlines the significance with which many women regarded this development. Violet Markham was innundated with letters congratulating her, including one in which the writer commented that their recollection of Neville Chamberlain was 'that he was a nice creature, but not over-clever, and I expect you and Mrs Tennant will have to run him'.⁸⁰ Philippa Strachey, the Secretary to the London Society for Women's Suffrage, wrote before the announcement in the papers, expressing her relief at the news, sympathising with her for having 'this crushing task imposed upon you' and assuring her of every help from the Office of the Women's Service Department.⁸¹ Mary Macarthur told her she would say a prayer for her:

'I admire your magnificent courage...Our friendship will be tried by fire. May it emerge from the ordeal as gold'.⁸² J.A. Spender of the *Westminster Gazette* offered to help in any way possible and declared that he would certainly do his best 'to shield you from the malicious criticism to which everyone is exposed in these days'; Miss Durham at the Employment Department of the Board of Trade hoped 'that we may work in the closest co-operation. I shall of course be ready and anxious to help in any way - for this is part of winning the war'.⁸³

Violet Markham herself commented that she wished they had been allowed to tackle the problem nine months earlier; it was very late to try and call any sort of national organisation into existence.⁸⁴ The announcement in the papers of her appointment had caused her to be 'snowed under' with letters and requests to work for the new women's department, including some from old acquaintances she hadn't heard from in years. As she wryly remarked, she 'never knew before how full the world was of capable women with the highest organising ability'.⁸⁵

There is no doubt that Markham considered that the Women's Section (WS) NSD should have wide responsibilities in connection with women's employment, which would include control of any prospective women's corps formed to work in or with the army. She made her views clear in a document she wrote, on 'Suggestions for the Organisation of women under the Director General of National Service'.⁸⁶ The first step was for Mr Chamberlain to establish a small Committee (the majority of whose members should be women) to conduct the work of WS NSD, which should advise the Director General on all questions of women's employment, and which would be charged with definite executive

functions as regards the enlistment, training and organisation of a women's corps to work with the Army.

The form which Markham suggested a 'State Women's Corps' should take resembled Furse's earlier proposal: there should be commissioned and non-commissioned officers under the direction of a Woman Chief Executive Officer, attached to the staff of the Director General of National Service, though she would work closely with the War Office. Women should be enlisted as men were enlisted in the Army - for the term of the war - and they should be paid, fed, housed and clothed by the state. Local arrangements should be made for the preliminary selection of candidates, with final selection and appointment of higher grade officers to be undertaken by officials of the Corps in the Director General's Women's Department.

Markham also assumed that the sphere of responsibility of her proposed Women's Department would extend beyond raising a State Service Women's Corps to work with the Army. All appeals for women's service should be made through the NSD, in order to prevent duplication of registration and competition for sources of supply. No separate organisation of women should be set up by any government department independently of the Director General of National Service, and until the Women's Department was in good working order, the question of ordinary economic employment of women should not be considered.

V. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps

A 'Communiqué to Press' had been drawn up by the War Office by 1 February, summarising terms and conditions of service for the employment of women with the Armies in France, and listing classes of employment and rates of pay.⁹⁷ In the circumstances, it is difficult to believe that much importance was to be attached to the views of the women who had been invited to Lord Derby's Women's Conference, which finally took place on 6 February.⁹⁸

Lord Derby announced to the meeting that 12,000 women were wanted in France as soon as possible. They would all be supplied from the Department of National Service, but when actually at work they would become part of the Army; they would be controlled by the Army, and thus would have to go wherever they were told. The Adjutant General outlined a scheme by which women would be placed in France, and Lord Derby explained that they were still considering whether women sectional commanders, who would be responsible for the work and welfare of the women, should report directly to the military officer in general control, or rather, as he personally favoured, through a Lady General Inspector. It was agreed that the War Office should draw up a form of contract with a scale of penalties; women would be put in uniform, and the contract would constitute a form of enlistment. The choice of clothing would be left to Lady sectional commanders, and it was generally agreed that women should be paid on the same basis as the men whom they replaced. The question of women officers was discussed. Derby 'could not give any guarantee on this matter', though he agreed to consider the possibility of their grades and pay also being on the same basis as that of military officers.

According to Mona Chalmers Watson, recalling this first meeting a year later, the Adjutant General had been 'in a very bad temper' throughout.⁸⁹ Far from being a consultation with women, the whole affair was, rather, a presentation of what had already been decided upon. Lord Derby told them that women were to be substituted in France; one woman was to be head of the whole thing - and all agreed. Mrs Chalmers Watson claimed that all the women present wanted the girls to be paid on the same basis as soldiers, but that the Financial Representative at the meeting was against it. Derby had said he would never allow enlistment for women, as it would mean an Act of Parliament rather than an Order in Council.⁹⁰

AGXI, the Women's branch within the Adjutant General's Department, was officially inaugurated in Devonshire House, Piccadilly, on 19 February, 1917.⁹¹ Lt. Colonel James Leigh Wood⁹² was appointed Assistant Adjutant General in charge of the branch, directly responsible to the Adjutant General for its administration; Mrs Chalmers Watson was appointed Chief Woman Controller at home, and Helen Gwynne Vaughan the Chief Woman Controller overseas.⁹³ AGXI's duties were: 'Administration, Organisation and General Arrangements connected with the employment of women with the Army', and its formation was announced in Office Memorandum No. 912.⁹⁴

The unpaid (at his own request) appointment of Lt. Col. J. Leigh Wood (CB, CMG), was not a happy choice, at least as far as the women were concerned. Mrs Chalmers Watson described him as 'always her *bête noir*. He wanted to prove the scheme of women working with the army impossible by creating innumerable difficulties'.⁹⁵ Helen Gwynne-Vaughan commented that when she was on tour in France with Colonel

Leigh-Wood, on their first investigative trip, in an effort to make appropriate conversation she had asked him whether his wife was interested in their new venture. She received the discouraging reply 'My wife, Mrs Gwynne-Vaughan, is a truly feminine woman'.⁹⁶

But whatever his faults, Lt. Colonel Leigh Wood quickly got to work. Even before the official announcement of the formation of AGXI, he had sent the Adjutant General his proposals for the scheme for the employment of women with the armies in France.⁹⁷ His recommendations were based upon his discussions with 'representative women of various organisations'.⁹⁸ At this time there were approximately 33,000 women employed with the Army in Great Britain, under many different categories. Their conditions of service and rates of pay, etc., were laid down in several Army Council Instructions, and were apparently working satisfactorily:⁹⁹ to alter completing the existing system of pay would 'tend to confusion without corresponding benefit to the Army'. While it might be possible - even expedient - at some future date to introduce a change, the main necessity at this time was to replace men in France by women, and Leigh Wood recommended strongly that for the time being no change should be made in regard to the conditions of service in Great Britain.¹⁰⁰

The situation with regard to women for France was materially different. The essence of the matter was speed in providing women for substitution: this depended first, upon the provision of suitable accommodation for the women and, secondly, upon recruitment. There were great difficulties in providing proper accommodation, but obviously it would be futile to recruit women until they could be housed. As for pay, the original proposal had been to pay women at

Army rates with free rations and lodgings. Leigh Wood claimed that an analysis of this system compared with the rates of pay applicable to women at home showed that it would not offer sufficient attraction to the women it was proposed to enlist for service abroad.¹⁰¹ In addition, a system of payment upon Army scale would cause confusion in the future between rates at home and those abroad.

There had already been a dispute over the question of women's pay between the Financial Section of the War Office (F6) and AGI (Women), the War Office department which had been concerned with women's employment and its projected expansion before the formation of AGXI. AGI had been working on a draft ACI, in connection with the employment of women in France, which it had submitted to F6 at the end of January, 1917. F6 complained to the Director of Financial Services at the War Office that they had not seen Lawson's *Report on the Substitution of Women* before they had been sent the draft ACI, and they were horrified at the extent to which it was proposed to substitute women in France.¹⁰²

On 5 February F6 wrote to Lt. Col. J. Earl in AGI (Women), informing him that in the opinion of the Financial Section, the conditions of women's service in France should be kept quite distinct from those applicable in this country. They were quite certain it would not be necessary to offer MORE inducements than they did at home (except as regards rations and lodging): 'When it is announced that women are wanted for France there will be a general stampede of volunteers from all the women now employed - at least that is our *very* decided view'.¹⁰³ In reply, Lt. Col. Earl told the Financial Section that at the conference held on 6 February it had been agreed that all

women accepted for service overseas would be integral to the Army, and be paid at existing rates of pay for the men whom they would replace, with certain modifications for different classes.¹⁰⁴ These would not be materially different from the rates under the existing ACIs, but where existing rates exceeded those proposed, the new rates would not apply to women already serving. These same conditions should apply to women serving at home; and all those who were presently employed as civil servants for the Army and War Office should be given the chance to come into line, on the understanding that they would be liable to serve at home or abroad as required. In response to F6's suggestion that there was no need for the women to have a full uniform - that a badge or a light cloak and head-dress would suffice - Earl retorted that uniform abroad was considered indispensable.¹⁰⁵

The following day F6 wrote to Perry, the Director of Financial Services, informing him that until they knew just what principle had been approved for the women they could go no further: they must know if women abroad were really to be paid the same rates as the men they replaced. This would mean 'paying them as *soldiers* - and what would happen about separation allowance, pensions, etc.?'¹⁰⁶ They should presumably only adopt the principle of giving women the same pay as the men they replaced if it was adopted generally for *all* women. At present, with very few exceptions, it had not been adopted. It was not clear whether the Secretary of State for War had approved that this principle would be adopted for women working with the Army, or whether it had merely been discussed, and was to be resubmitted for his decision. But assuming that the principle of paying women the same as the men they replaced *was* accepted, what was to be done about

women who did not replace men one for one - which was the vast majority of cases? 'The *whole* essence of dilution of labour is, not replacement of one man by one woman but an alteration of the whole process and minute subdivisions of work. Similarly thousands of *additional* women have been taken on NOT in replacement of men. We cannot start this principle piecemeal'.¹⁰⁷

Colonel Leigh-Wood, aware of this earlier dispute with the Financial Department, claimed that a simple and effective way of dealing with the matter was to apply the provisions contained in the ACIs dealing with the employment of women at home to women serving abroad, and deduct from their pay a sum based upon the approximate cost of a suitable ration and a small charge for washing.¹⁰⁸ But despite his effort to settle the issue, the question of pay was not easily resolved.¹⁰⁹

As for the actual form of agreement, Leigh Wood suggested it should be as simple as possible:

In as much as it is impossible to enlist women under the Army Act it is questionable whether any form of agreement would be binding in a Civil Court. One must rely upon the patriotism and earnest wish of the women to work for the country at this juncture. It would be a definite agreement that all women would be brought back to England at the country's expense irrespective of whether she had misbehaved herself, and was in consequence discharged from the service.¹¹⁰

Leigh Wood also reported that as a result of discussion with the Hon. Arthur Stanley (Lord Derby's brother, and head of the Joint Committee of BRCS and St John's) it had been arranged that AGXI could be accommodated in Devonshire House, alongside the VAD HQ, and it was suggested that the main organisation be called the 'Women's Auxiliary Army Force'.

The first public announcement of the Women's Army Corps appeared prematurely, on 20 February, in the *Daily Express*.¹¹¹ Declaring 'Women to join the Army in France', the paper detailed the scheme 'devised by the Adjutant General for the substitution of women for men in the Army, both in France and at Home'. It was intended to release for the Army men now employed in clerical and other departments, and the organisation would work in direct communication with Mrs Tennant, Director of Women's Branch, NSD. Women who wanted 'to take up this Army work' should not apply directly to Devonshire House, but rather, enrol with Mrs Tennant's Department. Army authorities would draw on WS NSD for supplies of candidates as needed, who would then be sent before a committee at Devonshire House.

The 'Leader' of the *Daily Express* put forward the view that allowing women to work in non-combatant occupations in France was

proof that the Government is determined to make the mobilisation of the nation a reality and not a pretence. The new invitation to woman is an acknowledgement that she is indispensable, and this acknowledgement must have a far-reaching effect on the social and political changes that will follow after the war.¹¹²

The following day, with the headline 'Supreme Call to Women: Two Great Armies Required', the *Daily Express* reported that its exclusive report of 'The full and correct details of the national scheme for an Army of Women in France' had caused 'the greatest interest throughout the whole country',¹¹³ but actual enrolment could not be made until the 'official call' was issued. Such masses of women had offered their services at St Ermin's Hotel the day before that Mrs Tennant had arranged that the names and addresses of anyone who wanted to enrol should be recorded.

On Sunday 25 February Lt Colonel Leigh Wood, Mrs Chalmers Watson and Mrs Helen Gwynne Vaughan left for France, and the following Wednesday *The Times* reported that it was 'now officially announced that women were to be employed to a greater extent with the Armies in France'.¹¹⁴ Terms of service and categories of employment were listed, but it was explained that until the return of the 'Commission' from France, arrangements would not be finally settled. *The Times* described the scheme as 'an expansion of the employment of women by the Army Council, which has proved so successful in most commands'.¹¹⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* provided a greater sense of occasion:

Throughout two and a half years of a war that taxes our manhood to its uttermost tradition has decreed that thousands of soldiers fit for more active service should do work that is well within the compass of women. That tradition is ended, and with its passing the face of the British Army is altered for all time...The direct contribution which the women who take men's places will make to increasing our combatant ranks will be important. Not less important is the recognition the step implies of the full extent to which the help of women may be used in the greatest of all national emergencies.¹¹⁶

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 6 [Pages 130 to 161]

1. D. Haig, General, Commander in Chief, British Armies in France; to Secretary, WO., 21 November 1916, 121 France/45, PRO WO32/5091.
2. Diaries of General Haig, Friday 24 November 1916, PRO WO256/14.
3. B.B. Cubitt, Sec. to Army Council to G.O. C-in-C, B.A. in France. 29 November 1916, 121/France/45, PRO WO32/5091. E.M. Woodward to A.G. GHQ B.A. in France, 9 November 1916; D. Haig to Sec. W.O., 13 November 1916, *ibid*.
4. Cubitt, 29 November 1916, *op. cit.*, para 8.
5. Army Council records give no indication of when, or in what detail, the matter was discussed. The Army Council met four times in November 1916. The most likely occasion for the decision that women should substitute for men was at the 196th Meeting, on 29 November. (*Minutes of Proceedings of, & Precis Prepared for, The Army Council for 1915/16*, PRO WO163/21). The next meeting of the Army Council, the 197th, was on 18 December, 1916; by that time the decision to use women in France had been made. The Army Council discussed 'Manpower Requirements for Expansions and New Services' at the meeting on 29 November, and approved an estimation that 137,000 Category A men would be required within the Army. (Precis No. 846, *Man-Power Requirements for Expansions and New Services*, para 3, PRO WO163/21). They also discussed labour requirements for the new services, and within this category, which totalled 273,000, it had been estimated that 100,000 would be women. This included such jobs as construction of factories; explosives; iron and steel; repairs and other government work; aeroplanes; tanks and shells. No indication was given of exactly where the 100,000 women were expected to work. The only other mention of women at that meeting was when the Army Council agreed that a grant of £25 should be made from Canteen profits to Miss Gladys Storey's Fund - to provide bovril for the troops.
6. *Directorate of Organisation - History 1914 - 18*, p. 589, PRO WO 162/6.
7. I have been unable to find a copy of the letter from War Office to Haig dated 4 December 1916. The letter is referred to in a letter from Haig to War Office, 10 December 1916, PRO WO32/5251.
8. Gen. Sir D. Haig, GO C in C, British Armies in France to Sec. to WO, 10 December 1916 (2A), PRO WO32/5251.
9. The Director General of Transportation at this time was Eric Geddes, brother to Auckland Geddes and Mrs Chalmers Watson.
10. Telegram from A.G. to A.G. GHQ France, 7 December 1916; letter A.G. to G.O. C in C, British Armies in France, 8 December 1916, PRO WO32/5091.

11. Diaries of General Haig, 10 December 1916, PRO WO256/14.
12. War Diary of Lt Col J. Baker, Chief Ordnance Officer, Base HQ Rouen, 13 December 1916, PRO WO95/4046.
13. See War Diary of Col. C.D.R. Watts, C.M.G. Chief Ordnance Officer Havre, 18 December 1916, PRO WO95/4035. See also *Report of General Lawson*, 16 January 1917, when he comments that the Army Ordnance Department on Lines of Communication had approximately 3,350 French women working very satisfactorily in Base workshops. IWM Army 3^a/2.
14. War Diary of Lt. Col. J. Baker, CO Rouen, 30 January 1917, PRO WO95/4046.
15. Lt. Col. J. Baker, War Diary, 16 December 1916, *ibid*.
16. War Diary, QMG Branch, November/December 1916; Montreuil, 16 December 1916, 186 Appendix XII.61, PRO WO95/32. The Directorates under the Quartermaster-General were the Directorates of Transport, Supplies, Ordnance and Remounts.
17. *Ibid*.
18. Eric Geddes, DGT to CGS 18 December 1916 (in Haig to Sec. WO, 30 December 1916, PRO WO32/5251. There does not appear to have been any standard method used to assess the number of women needed to replace men; it was largely guesswork. In the case of replacement of male cooks, the same number, or fewer, women were normally required.
19. *Ibid*.
20. Field Marshal Sir D. Haig, C in C (G.H. Fowke, AG for Field Marshal) to Sec., WO, 12 January 1917, PRO WO32/5251.
21. G.H. Fowke, AG for C in C, BA in France, for Haig, to Sec. WO, 15 January 1917, PRO WO32/5251.
22. A reference to Lloyd George's speech in the Commons on 19 December 1916, announcing the formation of the National Service Department.
23. C.F.N. Macready, AG to QMG (Cowans), 20 December 1916, PRO WO32/5251.
24. *Ibid*.
25. *Ibid*. Bracketed words are guesses; the letter is torn.
26. Conference on 'The Organisation of Women employed by the Army (in connection with Compulsory Service)' 5 January 1917, IWM Army 3^a/3.
27. Conference on 'The Organisation of Women employed by the Army', 5 January 1917, *ibid*.

28. Ibid.
29. C.F.N. Macready to General Woodward, 8 January 1917, IWM Army 3^a/2.
30. Minutes of Conference, 'The Organisation of Women Employed by the Army in Connection with Compulsory Service', 10 January 1917, PRO WO 162/32.
31. Minutes Sheet, 13 January 1917, PRO WO162/32.
32. Minutes, 'The Employment of Women in the Army', 15 January 1917, PRO WO162/33. Chairman: E.M. Woodward, Director of Organisation; Mrs Leach; Miss Ellis; Mrs Mapplebeck; Major M. Haldane (M.I.5); Col. Earle; Lt. Henderson Scott; Lt Adderley; Mr Hills; Mr Fleming. The Adjutant General did not attend on this occasion.
33. Ibid.
34. Minute to Adjutant General from E.M. Woodward, D.O., 15 January, 1917, IWM Army 3^a/2.
35. *Report by General H.M. Lawson C.B. on the No. and Physical Categories of Men employed out of the fighting Area in France*, typescript, IWM Army 3^a/2.
36. Ibid., para. 3.
37. Ibid., paras. 5 and 7.
38. Ibid., para. 32., 'Employment of Women'.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., Appendix 'B'.
41. *Confidential Report by Lt Gen. H.M. Lawson on the No. and Physical Categories of Men Employed out of the Fighting Area in France (In Continuation of Report dated January 16 1917) and On Economy of Manpower in the Fighting Areas of France, ordered by War Office Letter 121/France/45, dated 8 December 1916, 8 February 1917, Boulogne, IWM Army 3^a/3.*
42. By 'fighting services', Lawson meant Cavalry, Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Infantry and Machine Gun Corps. It seems likely that the substitution of women for men in the Army in France would be welcomed by the combatant corps, and resented by men who worked in rearward areas.
43. Nevil Macready to Lord Derby, Secretary of State for War, 24 January 1917, IWM Army 3^e/3.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.

46. Note typed below Memo by A.G., Ibid.
47. Arthur Marwick emphasises the Adjutant General's desire for a Women's Army Corps controlled by the War Office in order to avoid Trade Union influence over women. Marwick, *Women at War*, op. cit., p. 86. Macready was even more concerned about interference from women's organisations; in his memo of 24 January to Derby he did not raise the subject of trade unions.
48. Minute, Derby, 25 January 1917, IWM Army 3^s/3.
49. Women's Conference, 6 February 1917, IWM Army 3^s/6.
50. Katharine Furse to Sir Reginald Brade, 13 January 1917, IWM Army 3¹¹/3.
51. Sir Reginald Brade to K. Furse, 14 January 1917, IWM Army 3¹¹/3.
52. Katharine Furse to Reginald Brade, 18 January 1917, IWM Army 3¹¹/4.
53. Ibid.
54. There is no record of Brade's reply to K. Furse.
55. F.H. Durham, 'Note on Action taken by Employment Department in connection with the Employment of Women in Auxiliary Army Services', op. cit.
56. M.G. Fawcett, Mary Ward, Louisa Creighton, Annie Cowdray, to P.M., 17 January 1917, and to Earl of Derby, 18 January 1917. IWM Army 3¹¹/6.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. *Daily Express*, 31 January 1917, p. 1. Principal recommendations of Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform: 'Soldiers and Sailors - Persons of full age who ordinarily reside in an area but are serving in His Majesty's forces shall be qualified to vote as parliamentary electors within that area.'
'Women: The Conference decided by a majority that some measure of woman suffrage should be conferred. A majority of the conference was of the opinion that if Parliament should decide to accept the principle, any woman on the local government register who has attained a specified age, and the wife of any man on that register, if she has attained that age, should be entitled to vote as a parliamentary elector...Various ages were discussed, of which 30 and 35 received most favour'. A degree would also be the basis for qualification.
60. Mrs Strachey was Parliamentary Secretary to the NUWSS.
61. *Daily Express*, 1 February 1917, p. 5.

62. *The Times*, 21 February 1917, p. 2.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid. In December 1917 a Bill containing a measure of women's suffrage- women aged 30 and over, who met the six months residence qualification could vote - passed the House of Commons. *The Representation of the People Act (1918)* became law in June 1918. 'The Act added more votes to the Register than all its predecessors put together', A.J.P. Taylor, *English History, 1914 - 1945* (1970), pp. 132 - 4 and Note C. pp. 159 - 60.
65. How far the experience of the war influenced the decision to grant a measure of suffrage to women is a matter of historical debate: see, for example, Les Garner, *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty* (1984), pp. 94 - 103. Garner considers that 'A major distortion in many accounts of the gaining of the vote is the weight given to the change in "public opinion" caused by women's war work'. (Ibid., p. 95). Despite that criticism, he believes that the work women did during the war *did* influence opinion: 'it challenged some of the old myths, particularly with regard to female physical capabilities'. But Garner views the war as crucial to the success of the suffragists 'in a far more complex way than by merely changing some men's attitudes towards women': it removed political obstacles which had existed before 1914. The war caused political parties to call a truce, which gave the appearance of unity in the Government, and it emphasised the need for franchise reform. See also Sandra S. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy. Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900 - 1918* (Cambridge, 1986); Martin D. Pugh, 'Politicians and the Women's Vote 1914 - 1918', *History* 59 (1974), pp. 358 - 74.
66. Violet Markham, 18 January 1917, LSE Markham 4/4. No addressee on file copy, but it was almost certainly to Lloyd George. See Sir George Newman to Neville Chamberlain, 19 January 1917, PRO NATS 1/78, File W/100. Newman told Chamberlain a letter had been sent to the Prime Minister, urging that an independent women's organisation should not be allowed to spring up at the War Office without reference to Chamberlain himself, and that selection, organisation and control of women for Public Service work should be placed in Chamberlain's Department. The 'two ladies' referred to by Markham were probably Mrs Leach and Miss Ellis of the Women's Legion.
67. See Chapter 5, p. 116.
68. Markham, 18 January 1917, op. cit.
69. Ibid.
70. *Daily Express*, 8 January 1917.
71. *Daily Express*, 27 January 1917, pp. 1 and 4.
72. Ibid.

73. Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 27 January 1917, BU NC18/1/99.
74. Major Reginald Reynolds to Arthur Collins, 29 January 1917, PRO NATS 1/78, File W6303 WAAC. In fact, Lawson only recommended 12,100 in total for France, and the Adjutant General considered even that number too many.
75. Ibid.
76. *Daily Express*, 29 January 1917.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. *Daily Express*, 1 February 1917. By 1917 Markham probably would not have welcomed the description 'anti-suffragist'. Her anti-suffrage activities took place during the years 1908 - 1912. After what she considered her most successful anti-suffrage speech, at the Albert Hall in February 1912, and the death of her mother a few weeks later, she left the country for some months. Then the war intervened: 'which wiped anti-suffrage with many other things good and bad off the board' and 'by 1918 many things had made me an honest convert to the suffrage cause'. She had little pleasure in looking back to the anti-suffrage period of her life; she had changed her mind so fundamentally that she found it difficult 'in retrospect to give a very coherent account of what took me originally into the other camp'. Violet Markham, *Return Passage*, op. cit., pp. 95 - 103.
80. Richwell to V. Markham (undated), LSE Markham 4/4.
81. Miss Philippa Strachey to Violet Markham, 31 January 1917, Ibid.
82. Mary Macarthur to Violet Markham, 31 January 1917, Ibid.
83. J.A. Spender to V. Markham, 1 February 1917; F.H. Durham to V. Markham, 1 February 1917, Ibid.
84. V. Markham to I.G. Gibbon, Local Government Board, 10 February 1917, Ibid.
85. Violet Markham to Miss Georgina Frere, 10 February, 1917, Ibid.
86. Violet Markham, 'Suggestions for the Organisation of Women under the Director General of National Service', undated, IWM EMP 15/5. It is not clear whether Markham wrote it before or after her appointment as Assistant Director to WS NSD.
87. Department F.6 WO to Director of Financial Services, Minute 1, 1 February 1917, PRO WO32/5250
88. Draft Minutes, Women's Conference, 6 February 1917, IWM Army 39/6.

89. Interview with Mrs Chalmers in Edinburgh, 9 June 1918, IWM Army 312/5.
90. Ibid.
91. *Directorate of Organisation - History 1914 - 1918*, PRO WO162/6. On 28 April 1917 the branch was placed under the administration of the Director of Organisation, and split up into three sections - AGXI'A', AGXI'Q', AGXI'R' - each section having different duties. Ibid. See Ch. 7, Footnote 56.
92. Lt. Col. J. Leigh Wood became Sir James Leigh Wood, KBE, CMG, CB.
93. Helen Gwynne Vaughan records that when the Order came out announcing that she and Mrs Chalmers Watson were to be called 'Chief Woman Controllers', she objected; she 'did not think it would help to go to France as the Chief WC'. An amending order appeared after her complaint, and from then on, the senior appointments at home and abroad were 'Chief Controller', until 1918, when the Chief Controller at home became 'Controller-in-Chief'. Helen Gwynne Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, op. cit., p. 15.
94. *Directorate of Organisation - History*, op. cit. On 12 February Macready wrote to both Neville Chamberlain and Lady Londonderry, informing them that he had made considerable progress in establishing the necessary machinery for dealing with the employment of women in the Armies in France and at home. He assured Lady Londonderry that everything would be done to safeguard the interests of women. From this time the Military Cookery Section of the Women's Legion ceased to exist as a separate organisation and became part of the WAAC. Macready to Chamberlain, 12 February 1917, PRO NATS 1/78, File W6303; Lady Londonderry, *War Services and Women's Legion*, p. 14, IWM Army 11/11.
95. Interview with Mrs Chalmers Watson in Edinburgh, 9 June 1918, op. cit.
96. Dame H. Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, op. cit., p. 14.
97. Lt. Col. James Leigh-Wood to Adjutant General, 15 February 1917, PRO WO32/5250.
98. Ibid.
99. See Appendix I for a selection of ACIs relating to the employment of women by the Army.
100. The Adjutant General agreed with Leigh Wood, and when it was first set up, the WAAC was concerned only with women in France. The WAAC in Great Britain was not formally established until July 1917. See ACI 1069, 7 July 1917.

101. That is, Leigh Wood assumed that existing rates of pay for women at home were more than Army rates paid to men at this time.
102. Minutes from F6 to DFS, 1 February 1917; Lt C. J. Earl AG1 to F6, 8 February 1917, PRO WO32/5250.
103. Minute 3, F6 to AG1, 5 February 1917, Ibid.
104. Minute 4, Lt Col. J. Earl, AG1 to F6, 8 February 1917, Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Minute 5, F6 to DFS (Perry), 9 February 1917, Ibid.
107. Ibid. This was the same argument as was used to avoid paying women in industry the same as the men they replaced. See D. Thom, 'The Ideology of Women's Work', op. cit., Chapter 4.
108. Lt. Col. J. Leigh Wood to Macready, 15 February, 1917, PRO WO32/5250.
109. See Chapter 7 for further problems with WAAC pay.
110. Leigh Wood to Macready, 15 February 1917, op. cit.
111. *Daily Express*, 20 February 1917, p. 1. Arthur Stanley, Chairman of the Joint War Committee of BRCS and St John's Ambulance, complained to Leigh Wood that the announcement was 'a little premature although you have moved with a rapidity such as a Government Department has very seldom achieved'. Stanley thought the announcement about the WAAC would cause unrest among the VADs, and asked Leigh Wood to publicise the fact that all work connected with the sick and wounded would still be done by VADs working under the control of the Joint War Committee. Hon. Arthur Stanley, M.P.: BRCS, chairman of Joint War Com. to Col. J. Leigh Wood, 20 February 1917, PRO WO 162/10. Leigh Wood assured him that they did not wish to interfere with VADs, nor did the scope of Army Women's work touch their organisation in any way. Leigh Wood to Stanley, 21 February 1917, *ibid.*
112. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
113. *Daily Express*, 21 February 1917.
114. *The Times*, 28 February 1917.
115. *Ibid.*
116. *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 February 1917.

CHAPTER 7

1917 - TEETHING TROUBLES

The War Office announcement on 28 February 1917 that women were to be employed with the Army in France marked the beginning of interminable discussion and arguments about such aspects as pay and conditions, discipline and training, status and recruitment. Efforts to establish a steady supply of recruits for the WAAC created considerable tension between the main contenders for the privilege: The Women's Section National Service Department, and the Employment Exchanges,¹ now part of the newly formed Ministry of Labour, headed by John Hodges, a Labour M.P.²

The problems inherent in establishing a new department in the unsettled atmosphere of the war years were exacerbated by an underlying tension in the relationship between the staff concerned. Violet Markham's vision especially, of the WS NSD as being the closest that women would get to a Womanpower Board run by women, for women, clashed with the assumption of the War Office that WS NSD's most important duty was to supply all the women required for the WAAC, despite its own inability to predict either how many it could cope with immediately, or might need in the future.³ The high expectations aroused by the appointments of Tennant and Markham to the new women's section of the NSD were dashed when they finally failed to persuade the War Office to retain their services as recruiting agents for the WAAC.

For its part, the Employment Exchanges Department - notably in the persons of C.F. Rey⁴ and Frances Durham - was concerned above all to hold on to what they regarded as their legitimate position as the national organisation for the recruitment of labour. That the labour required in this instance was women to work for the Army did not, in their view, justify disregarding their hard-earned experience. They deeply resented WS NSD, which they suspected, correctly, of wanting both to take over their machinery and to force them to play second fiddle in this particular province.

Violet Markham described the National Service Department as 'a very unpleasant enterprise - the most unpleasant in my experience'.⁵ Her explanation of the 'fiasco' was that it was partly due to the manner in which the department had been formed. It was 'thrown together' to deal with 'the most explosive question in the country', yet it had at its head 'no seasoned politician but a successful business man with a seat neither in Parliament nor in the Cabinet'.⁶ Chamberlain chose a Birmingham municipal officer to run the office - 'inevitably a tyro in the game of Central Government when flung among the Whitehall hierarchy. The latter proceeded in their own ineffable way to show the contempt they felt for the newcomer'.⁷ Markham and her close friend, May Tennant, stepped 'into this scene of foredoomed failure' and it soon became clear to them that the department was heading for trouble, with the real cause being, in Markham's opinion, Chamberlain's failure to deal with the Labour Exchanges.⁸

I. The WAAC

The announcement by the War Office that a Women's Army Corps was to be formed was greeted with such enthusiasm by potential recruits that the flow of volunteers had to be discouraged. It was reported that the publication of the terms of Army service had brought 'an immense number of applications, both by post and in person, to National Service headquarters at St Ermin's Hotel. A stream of inquirers was passing through the swing doors all yesterday, and it swelled to a torrent in the luncheon hour'.⁹ But though many thousands would be wanted ultimately, the first batch of Army women engaged would be much smaller than at first anticipated and the official call for women was likely to be delayed as the 'Commission' had not yet completed its enquiries in France.

Initially the recruiting procedure was extremely laborious. AGXI notified the Director of Recruiting at the War Office of the number of women they needed; the Director of Recruiting then issued instructions to the Director of NSD to summon the women. NSD was asked to send a copy of the summons to the Director of Recruiting, who sent it back to AGXI. The first formal written request from the War Office was for just three women - two clerks and a shorthand typist - who were required in an Officers' Club in France.¹⁰ The number of requests for staff increased, and on March 16 Leigh Wood reported to the Director of Recruiting that a Selection Board would sit the following week, to choose sixty women for service as clerks in the Army Pay Department at Wimereux.¹¹

On 28 March the Army Council issued Instruction 537,¹² authorising the employment of WAAC personnel with the British Armies

in France, and a few days later the first draft of women proceeded overseas.¹³ They were to be paid for a 42 hour working week, with overtime if they worked longer. There were six main categories of employment: clerical (clerks, typists, shorthand-typists); cooks, waitresses, domestic staff; Motor Transport Service; Storehouse women, checkers and unskilled labour; telephone and postal services; and miscellaneous services - those who did not fit into any of the other five categories. No woman under 20 or over 40 would be eligible for employment, nor any woman whose husband was serving abroad.

Early in April discussions began about the substitution of women for men throughout Commands in Britain.¹⁴ The impetus for this was a shortage of manpower, combined with a desire to ensure control over women, who, it was believed, were becoming increasingly important to the workings of the Army at home. Auckland Geddes, the Director of Recruiting, explained that given the estimate of probable casualties during 1917, it was likely that they would obtain less than one-third of the men needed to replace them. As there was no chance of meeting casualties by new enlistments the shortage had to be made up by reorganisation within the Army, as had already begun overseas in France. To meet their requirements the question of employment of women in the Army had become of 'pressing necessity', whether they liked it or not. 'Enrolment' in some form was 'essential, in order to secure continuity of labour and control of women' and 'with control necessarily will arise responsibility...The Army will have a very serious responsibility in regard to the health of the Nation and for obvious reasons it is not desirable to employ an unnecessarily large number of women in the Army unless under proper control'.¹⁵

Leigh Wood reported later that the conference had been 'practically unanimous' in thinking that all women working for the Army at home should be properly enrolled, uniformed and medically examined, and made subject to discipline and punishment.¹⁶ Discipline and punishment was a vexed question. The contract between women and the State, as provided in the enrolment form used by the women who had already enrolled to go to France, was regarded as valueless as a means of enforcing discipline and continuity of service during the war, for it was based on a civil contract, and damages claimed against women would actually have to be proved. It was suggested that the desired continuity might be assured in one of two ways. The existing Army Act could be amended by an Act of Parliament so that women could be enlisted and made subject to it in the same way as men. This was objected to not only because it would take time, but because, according to Brigadier General Geddes, it would raise the awkward question of giving commissions to women: it would be much more acceptable if women were graded as officers but employed as civilians, thus avoiding (to the satisfaction of the War Office, at least) the delicate matter of female commissioned officers.¹⁷

Alternatively, it might be preferable to proceed by means of an amendment to the Defence of the Realm Act which could make enrolled women liable to certain disciplinary punishments (imprisonment, fines, etc.) for any breaches of contract, good order, discipline, and by doing this it would be possible to enrol women for home service on the same form as was used for women in France.

Though details still had to be confirmed, it was anticipated at the Conference of 10 April that approximately 14,000 women would be

required by Commands at home.'¹⁸ Lt. Col. Leigh Wood pointed out that, given the large number of women already employed by the Army - around 30,000 in January 1917 - and the large number which still could be employed - 22,000 - 'it follows that the Army at home will be, to a serious extent, dependent on women's labour'.¹⁹ This labour was entirely voluntary and (except for cooks) women were engaged on weekly rates. 'It is obvious that this state of affairs, depending on free labour, is most dangerous; it is equally certain that the demand from civilian competitors will become more acute as labour becomes scarcer, resulting in greater unsettlement of the Women'.²⁰

Leigh Wood suggested that by raising rates of pay the Army Council might retain women, and expressed the view that 'no risk as to continuity of labour should be taken on so vital a matter'.²¹ He reported that the three ladies present at the meeting had seemed to think that patriotism, combined with the attraction of wearing a uniform, would be sufficient to induce women to bind themselves for twelve months or the duration of the War, but he considered that extremely doubtful. Later, Mrs Chalmers Watson complained that Leigh Wood's interpretation was not a clear statement of her opinion: 'patriotism and a uniform without any status beyond that which is at present offered, will not get the women, but patriotism and being taken into the Army as part of it, will certainly count as a very strong inducement to women to join'.²²

The establishment of a disciplinary code for the WAAC was set in motion with the drafting of a Defence of the Realm Regulation 42(c), which was finally announced in the press on 12 May.²³ There was no specific reference in the regulation to women, and Mrs Tennant wrote

to Sir Reginald Brade at the War Office, asking him whether this new DORA applied to members of the WAAC, and if so, would he explain the exact character of the disciplinary measures proposed?²⁴

Brade replied that it was indeed intended to apply to the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.²⁵ In the rapidly growing system of substituting women for men it was essential that security of service on the part of the woman substitute should be assured. The WAAC was being recruited on a military basis and the ladies of this organisation were normally subject to the Army Act under the provisions of Section 176 (10) as being 'persons not otherwise subject to military law who accompany His Majesty's troops when employed on active service'. It would be undesirable to attempt to maintain discipline in such organisations by enforcing the penalties which the Army Act provided, so a code had been introduced, which was intended to secure the discipline of women's organisations without necessitating the appearance of women offenders before Courts Martial. The new Regulation 42(c) provided for the appearance of an offender before a Court of Summary Jurisdiction for any of the offences embodied in the Regulation. This eliminated the need for offenders to attend Court Martial, which would have to award a sentence of imprisonment as a minimum instead of the fines that a Court of Summary Jurisdiction could impose at their discretion.

Brade emphasised that this new Regulation only applied to persons who were enrolled for employment by the Army Council - at present the only persons enrolled were members of the WAAC.²⁶ Because they were neither commissioned nor enlisted, the power of requiring obedience to command within their own organisation did not exist under

the Army Act; therefore it was necessary to secure obedience by another code.²⁷

The fact that the Defence of the Realm Regulations did not operate outside Britain did not alter the effectiveness of Regulation 42(c) as the basis of a disciplinary code for the new Women's Corps. This aspect had been discussed earlier, and it had been agreed that the problem was easily resolved.²⁸ If women in France misbehaved to such an extent that they could not be dealt with adequately under the terms of the contract, and it was not desired to exercise summary powers of dismissal, they could simply be posted back to a unit in Britain, when the penal code under Regulation 42(c) would immediately come into operation in the event of further misbehaviour.

The form of enrolment itself provided for minor offences, for which fines could be made, and Chalmers Watson had been asked to draft standing orders for the WAAC, which would embrace regulations to obtain at work as well as when billeted or in hostels. WAAC Standing Orders - based largely on the system of regimental standing orders - would in effect be the disciplinary code of the WAAC, and would embody regulations as to dress, demeanour and behaviour whilst serving in the Corps.

Brade's reply to Mrs Tennant illustrates the difficulties encountered in clarifying the precise status of women in the WAAC at this time. On the one hand Brade described the WAAC as 'being recruited on a military basis' and therefore 'normally subject to the Army Act under provisions of Section 176(10)'; on the other 'owing to the fact that the members of the WAAC were neither commissioned nor enlisted, the power of requiring obedience to command within their own

organisation did not exist under the Army Act'. As the Directorate of Organisation commented, 'Discipline and Legal Questions were somewhat complicated as there was always some contention as to whether the QMAAC was subject to Military Law or not'.²⁹

It was almost as difficult to reach agreement about suitable pay for the WAAC, and the payment of women officers especially caused endless argument between the Adjutant General and the Financial Department of the War Office.³⁰ Macready insisted that there should be no comparison between WAAC officers and the nursing service - one of the arguments used by Finance to try and keep the rate of pay low. While it was agreed that the employment of ladies in positions of responsibility in the Adjutant General's department was indeed 'novel', the Finance Office pointed out that such employment elsewhere in Government service was not.³¹ Even if the War Office wished to shut its eyes to analogous cases, they could not expect the Treasury - to which all proposals about pay must be referred - to do so. The proposal to grade the 'ladies'³² for pay as Staff Officers at War Office rates and Officers RAMC was a return to the principle that had been suggested for the women to be employed with the Army, but dropped. The rates of Military Staff Officers were not at all appropriate to these civilians, who could not by any stretch of language be called Military Officers - and the underlying further principle that women should draw men's rate of pay was inconsistent with the practice of the Government service generally. C.H. Hutchinson at the Finance Office attacked the Adjutant General's suggestion that the fact that certain of his ladies had 'high University attainments' should make any difference, and boasted that

he had 'ladies of similar attainments working in my Department at very modest rates of pay'.³³

Arguments continued back and forth, with proposals and counter-proposals. Macready offered to put the FM's rates to the women Chief controllers and subordinates, and if they did not accept them, and resigned, he threatened that the whole WAAC organisation would have to be placed under some other branch of the War Office: he refused 'to accept responsibility with women who will take any rates of pay, irrespective of their capabilities'.³⁴ By the end of March no firm agreement had been reached and Macready complained to Lord Derby, insisting that when it had been decided that the Army should start an organisation for women, part of which would be overseas, it was an entirely new departure 'and not at all on the same lines with the women now employed with the Civil Service'.³⁵ The conditions under which the WAAC worked were in every way different, especially as they were thrown much more in contact with men; and it was necessary that every care should be taken to safeguard the War Office from criticisms which would rightly be levelled against it if inefficiency or scandals resulted. He had considered very carefully before offering the two chief appointments to the two ladies at present holding them, and he thought that a better choice could not have been made.

For the Finance Member the vital point at issue was that the Chief and Deputy Chief Controllers were refusing to serve unless they were

graded and paid as military officers. In my view that is an unreasonable demand...It is a novel doctrine that women cannot control women unless they have military grading and pay, and I understand that these ladies are not intended to exercise

military functions.. 'Equivalent rank' is not necessary for the control of nurses - or their relations with the RAMC.³⁶

Drawn into the debate, Lord Derby put forward a compromise.³⁷ He was prepared to recommend that the pay for the ladies should be 'generous', but he did not believe that their pay and status should be similar to certain ranks of officers serving in the Army, as he did not think a proper comparison could be made between the two. He suggested that those at the head of the WAAC be paid £550 p.a. and the Controller of Medical Services £560.

Despite the wranglings between the War Office departments there was little sign of a resolution of the precise status of the WAAC. At the beginning of May the three Departments - DO, AGXI and F6 - agreed that in view of the fact that the WAAC would be very closely associated with Army formations an arrangement which most nearly conformed to the Army would cause least difficulty, and it would be preferable that it should be organised on a military basis.³⁸ This conclusion was reversed a few days later, when Derby ruled that WAAC must be paid on a civil basis.³⁹ The battle continued, with the FO insisting that the FM had not yet even consented to the general extension of WAAC to England.⁴⁰ The lack of progress on the basic questions of pay and hours prompted Macready to complain to the FM that despite their earlier interview with the Secretary of State their departments 'do not seem to have got much further, and the whole of Women's organisation is still held up'.⁴¹

In a sharp rejoinder, Forster insisted that his department had 'shown every willingness to expedite settlement of these matters by discussion with yours' but though the questions were largely

financial, the financial view was not accepted.⁴² Forster claimed that he was not aware of the proposal, much less the decision, to extend the WAAC to England. While it might be necessary to make use of the WAAC in special cases in this country, he was strongly opposed to its general extension unless it was proved they could not get on without it.⁴³ They already had thousands of women working for the Army in different departments, and he could 'see no reason whatever why these persons should be brought into the semi- or pseudo- military organisation necessitated by the peculiar conditions of employment abroad'.⁴⁴ WAAC abroad were to wear uniform; the thousands of women that worked at home had done without it: 'Why should we incur the expense of uniforming them now?' he inquired. It was becoming increasingly difficult to supply khaki for men of the Army, and there was no cloth to spare for women 'who can work just as well in garments of other hue and texture provided, as hitherto, at their own expense'.

But despite all objections from Finance, at a Conference in Derby's office on 25 May 1917 it was finally agreed that the WAAC would be extended to England and would be 'applicable to all units, formations and offices administered by the Army Council with the exception of the War Office and those administered by the Finance Member'.⁴⁵

II. *Women's Section, National Service Department*

By April, the friction between National Service and the Employment Exchanges had worsened, and it was announced that the National Service scheme was to be examined by a committee.⁴⁶ Complaints had been made by NSD staff that the Exchange officials were hindering the success of the scheme by failing to place men who had volunteered to work, and the Director General of NSD was asking for additional powers.

Relations between WS NSD and the Employment Exchanges were also strained, and little better between the Women's Section and the War Office. A meeting which was intended to establish cooperation between the two disintegrated in a squabble.⁴⁷ Frances Durham walked out, refusing to provide women for the War Office unless her department dealt with it directly, rather than indirectly, through WS NSD. She recorded that

The discussion, which had throughout been punctuated with somewhat unfriendly remarks addressed to me, degenerated into personal attack. I regret to have to place on record that both by Mrs Tennant and more particularly by Miss Markham I was subjected to such discourtesy, that I felt no useful purpose would be served by remaining, and I accordingly withdrew.⁴⁸

Shackleton, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, supported the view that the Exchanges must deal directly with whoever required the workers they were recruiting.⁴⁹ He told Mrs Tennant that his department would give every assistance to selecting applications for the War Office Selection Board, but Employment Exchanges must be in direct touch with the War Office and free to take whatever steps they considered necessary to recruit labour.⁵⁰ Tennant informed Shackleton that they could not accept his proposals, as they amounted

to complete abrogation of the responsibility placed on them by the War Office.⁵¹

But despite Tennant's insistence that her department should have chief responsibility to recruit for the War Office, WS NSD was having trouble finding the number of women they had undertaken to supply. Between 20 February and 15 May 1917, 5,336 application forms had been received from women anxious to take up clerical work in France, the majority of applications coming in response to the press announcement made by the War Office on 28 February.⁵² By the beginning of May a total of 39 Boards had been held and 1,853 women had been called up for interview, of whom 921 had been accepted. According to Lillian Clapham at the NSD, the disparity between the numbers called up and the numbers appointed was mainly because a large number of candidates either failed to turn up, or withdrew their application.⁵³ The scarcity of applicants had provoked an extensive publicity campaign from the beginning of May, but still there was a dearth of candidates in every part of the country.⁵⁴

While staff at WS NSD expressed concern at their inability to produce enough applicants for the WAAC, at the War Office DR1 and AGXI were considering alternative recruiting arrangements.⁵⁵ In an effort to improve the efficiency of the new women's corps, at the end of April AGXI had been placed under the administration of the Director of Organisation and split into three sections: AGXI 'A', AGXI 'Q' and AGXI 'R'.⁵⁶ Lt Colonel A.H.N. Corsellis replaced Lt Colonel Leigh Wood as Assistant Adjutant General of AGXI, and proved a happier choice. There was a growing feeling at the War Office that recruiting for the WAAC would be helped greatly if it was generally known that the appeal

was issued by the War Office itself, rather than by the Director General National Service. A confidential memo was issued to all Commands, informing them that it might become necessary in the very near future to call upon recruiting staff throughout the country to 'give considerable assistance' in obtaining women recruits for WAAC.⁵⁷ It was likely that in a few weeks time the WAAC would undergo an enormous expansion to meet the growing demand from France and heavy requisitions from Home Commands, and it was 'more than probable' that the provincial organisation of the NSD would not be able to bear the strain.

At the end of May, following a meeting between staff from DRI and AGXI and WS NSD to discuss recruitment, Markham told Tennant that she, Miss Wilson and Miss Clapham all were convinced that there 'was a definite intrigue on foot to oust our Department from any share in the work'.⁵⁸ Chalmers Watson had been 'silent and unfriendly, and there was an unmistakable under-current of reserve and hostility'. Markham was determined to alert Chamberlain to what was happening, and she wrote to him, expressing her concern at the position with regard to the WAAC, and her belief that it was vital to take stock of the situation before the War Office sprung new proposals for recruiting upon them.⁵⁹ She admitted that WS NSD was having difficulty meeting requisitions from the War Office for clerical workers in the WAAC, despite wide publicity; she claimed that the main reason was the relatively low rates of pay offered, which discouraged women from joining the Corps. She acknowledged that she was dealing 'with impressions and conjectures rather than definite facts', but insisted

that 'a very definite attempt is on foot to oust this Department from its position as recruiting agent for the War Office'.⁶⁰

The way things were developing it looked as if the War Office would tie the hands of NSD by regulations and conditions which made successful recruiting impossible, and would then accuse them of failing to meet their demands, and remove their responsibility for recruiting.⁶¹ It was not easy to 'fathom what personalities, grievances or ambitions lay behind that policy';⁶² relations with DRI officials, Colonel Scovell and Mr Fanthorpe had been 'quite satisfactory', but the position with AGXI was different. It was impossible not to be conscious of a lack of cordiality in their relations with AGXI, or any real spirit of cooperation with regard to the duties they performed jointly. She was unable to account for the unfriendliness, except by the hypothesis that AGXI authorities were anxious to assume the entire direction of all matters connected with the Women's Army, and wished to free themselves of the measure of control that WS NSD exercised in the early stages of recruitment and selection.

This was not, perhaps, unnatural from their point of view, but Markham questioned whether it was both in the public interest, and in the interest of women themselves that recruiting for the Women's Army should pass entirely from the hands of the Director General of National Service to those of the War Office. The War Office might claim that with women in charge of AGXI they were as capable of recruiting and selecting candidates as WS NSD. Markham doubted whether this was the case. The Department was not 'remarkable for its efficiency';⁶³ the principal women controllers had little or no

experience of administration; none of them was in touch with labour questions, or realised the importance of industrial issues. A certain tendency to autocracy, which may have been unintentional, did not make a very happy impression. Constant complaints reached WS NSD of the lack of courtesy shown to candidates at the Boards.

Allowances must be made, no doubt, for the novel experiment of maintaining discipline in a Women's Army, but it was essential to secure just and fair treatment for women 'and to be satisfied that amateur dragooning is not being carried out to an undesirable extent'.⁶⁴ In France the girls were at the mercy of their officers; they could not leave the country without permission and censorship of letters made it impossible to complain to friends if cases of harsh treatment arose. The position would not be improved by eliminating the National Service Department, which at present acted as 'a wholesome check on the minor autocracies of AGXI'.⁶⁵

After he received her letter, Chamberlain delayed seeing Markham for as long as possible, and when she finally succeeded in tracking him down, he informed her that he had seen both Geddes and Scovell, and there was to be a 'clean cut' between WS NSD and the War Office in connection with the Women's Army.⁶⁶ According to Markham, Chamberlain showed no interest in any of the issues she had raised 'and in his usual blind fashion he does not in the least appreciate the infinite discredit which will attach to our Department to be ignominiously kicked out as the War Office propose to do, and as he without a struggle proposes to acquiesce in'.⁶⁷

Markham told Tennant that she was anxious to resign at the first possible moment: she had become increasingly dissatisfied and unhappy

about the whole policy of the Department, and the position of impotence to which the Women's Section had been drifting. 'We are not in any sense a Department of National Service. We are simply an inferior Employment Department kicked in turn by all the others'.⁶⁶ They had to face the fact that all the high aims and hopes with which they had set out had fallen to the ground. With the disappearance of WAAC work, the chief administrative duties of their section would vanish, and she found it humiliating and unsatisfactory to be left in a position where elements of usefulness were reduced daily.

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It is not easy to determine the reasons for the apparent failure of WS NSD to recruit successfully for the WAAC at this time, as most of the evidence suggests that women were available for work. There had been instances of a shortage of women. Back in September 1916, according to the Board of Trade, there had been a serious shortage of female labour in textile trades and other 'women's trades', which the Board explained was due to the fact that 'men's work' had proved more attractive to women, who were also drawn by higher wages in munitions factories.⁶⁷ The report of the Chief Inspector of Factories for 1916 had expressed a similar view of the situation: except in a few localities 'the supply of women labour still appeared to be practically unlimited'.⁷⁰ According to this source, 'The only acute scarcity was in the "normal" women's trades, which women had left for men's work and in which the "low pre-war standards of wages and welfare persist"'.⁷¹

Undoubtedly, additional women were employed in certain industrial occupations during the period when WS NSD was having

difficulty recruiting women for the WAAC. An examination of figures relating to women's employment indicates, for example, that between April and July 1917 an additional 40,000 women were employed in metal trades; 2,000 in chemical trades; 4,000 in food trades and 4,000 in wood trades. According to the same source, the overall increase in the number of women employed in all industrial occupations between April and July 1917 was some 63,000 women.⁷² About the middle of 1917 the textile trades were to become seriously depressed owing to a shortage of raw material, and between July 1917 and April 1918 there was a drop of about 38,000 in the number of women employed in that industry. Presumably some of these women would have become available for work in the new women's Corps.⁷³

In the previous year, April 1916 to April 1917, an increase of some 651,000 women employed in industry had been recorded.⁷⁴ For the year April 1917 to April 1918 the comparable figure was 301,000, with over two-thirds of that increase occurring during the first six months - that is, between April and October 1917.

In their investigation into the *Economic Effects of the War upon Women and Children in Great Britain*, Osgood Andrews and Hobbs emphasise the difficulty in 1917 of providing an accurate answer to the question of whether more women could be obtained for the industrial needs of the nation, or if the expansion in the number of workers had come near to exhausting the supply.⁷⁵ According to their priorities, different people took different views of the situation. When, back at the end of 1916, the Board of Trade estimated that there were still 1½ million women with industrial or commercial experience not working, women labour leaders had replied that at least a million

of those women were over 35, and most were married: 'To take such women away from homes and children "will not be to the national advantage"'.⁷⁶ A year later, in November 1917, representatives from the Ministry of Munitions expressed a similar view that there were plenty of women available, drawing attention to the thousands of women registered at employment exchanges to prove their point.⁷⁷

In the circumstances, it seems reasonable to assume that apart from the acknowledged shortage of women workers in 'women's trades', in 1917 women were available for work, provided that conditions and pay were reasonably satisfactory. Such a view is supported by Neville Chamberlain's biographer, who writes that by the middle of March 1917 there was a sudden halt in the demand for women in both filling factories and army services:

Soon the [Employment] Exchanges had on their registers more women than could be absorbed, even without drawing upon the considerable numbers being moved to volunteer by the women's section of the National Service Department.* Within a few months, the inability of the War Office to take the predicted numbers of women, with the consequence of long delays between volunteering and interview, and the inability to find any duties for many of the volunteers, became a rich source of unhappiness and grumbling. In practice, the Exchanges were meeting almost all the vacancies for women notified to them.⁷⁸

If it is indeed the case that the Employment Department Registers were overflowing with women at this time, then, as Markham suspected, the Employment Exchanges may have been withholding their cooperation from WS NSD. The trend seems to have continued: on July 13, 1917, over 29,000 adult women were recorded on the 'live registers' of the employment Exchanges.⁷⁹

One obvious explanation for the difficulty experienced by WS NSD in providing sufficient clerical workers for the WAAC at a time when

the Employment Exchange registers were apparently quite full, is that potential clerical staff did not register at the Employment Exchanges. Not, of course, that this would vindicate WS NSD's failure; on the contrary, it would suggest a weakness in their methods of attracting potential recruits outside of the Employment Exchanges system.

The problems of recruitment raise the thorny question of class, which inexorably played its part in informing decisions about recruiting methods for the different women's corps, as well as their public images.⁸⁰ Lacking reliable statistics, I have depended upon two main sources of information to provide an indication of the social or occupational background of women who joined the women's service corps in the First World War: first, assumptions about the likely background of women who took up particular occupations or trades and, secondly, the views of contemporaries. The popular view of the WAAC is that the majority of its 'members'⁸¹ were composed of the working class; yet in its early stages, there were more clerical workers (usually assumed to be middle or lower middle class) than any other category, including domestic staff. And even those recorded as domestic staff cannot all be assumed to be working class; for example, Winifred Holtby entered the ranks of the WAAC as an ordinary domestic worker.⁸²

The oft-repeated misgivings about the effectiveness of recruiting through Employment Exchanges were based on the belief that certain 'classes' of women would not use them. Violet Markham and Mrs Tennant were adamant not only that the Exchanges had failed to supply sufficient women for some kinds of work, but also that they were extremely unpopular with certain classes both of employers and

employed. They claimed that WS NSD had made a specific arrangement with the VAD because the latter was unwilling to continue to deal directly with the Employment Exchanges, because they failed to supply the type of women required.⁴³ There were other instances of their unpopularity: Neville Chamberlain reported that Labour representatives were insistent that a proposal he had made to obtain substitutes would receive no support from Labour if Employment Exchanges were part of the machinery of the scheme.⁴⁴

Staff at WS NSD certainly assumed that their department had been set up explicitly for the purpose of supplementing the machinery of the Employment Department, in recognition of the peculiar demands made for women's labour during the war, and the fact that middle class women had been hitherto unaccustomed to deal with Employment Exchanges, and that certain well organised trades had not been in the habit of using them either.⁴⁵ When, in July 1917, Lord Derby told Chamberlain that he had decided to let the Employment Exchanges do their recruiting for the WAAC instead of National Service, he conceded that there were many suitable women who would not go to the Exchanges, and he expressed the hope that in addition to using their existing national machinery, the Employment Exchanges would also 'institute some organisation which...will sift more carefully than the Clerks at Employment Exchanges are able to do the wheat from the chaff and only send up for final selection those who are really likely to be acceptable'.⁴⁶

Derogatory assumptions about the nature of the Employment Exchanges were a definite handicap to recruitment, and matters were not helped, for example, by such sentiments as those put forward in a

popular publication of 1917, which described the 'labour Exchanges' as catering 'rather for the working-class girl or woman than for the woman who, though normally of the leisured class, had been compelled by change of circumstances to earn her own living'.⁸⁷ Such women, it was suggested, would be 'well advised' to obtain employment through personal introduction, or through the Central Committee of Women's Employment or Civil Service Commission, if they had university qualifications. By November 1917 special Reception Departments for the WAAC had been set up by the Employment Exchanges, yet an enquiry arranged by the Ministry of National Service at that time reported that women still had objections to attending such places.⁸⁸ Perhaps, as was suggested early in 1918, the reason for the difficulties faced by the Exchanges was largely the fact that Government never clearly stated that their machinery was the State machinery for the purpose of recruiting for the various corps; if such a statement had been made publicly, it was claimed, it would have gone a long way towards removing the difficulties.⁸⁹

In addition to domestic and clerical workers, the WAAC also needed administrators to manage hostels. There was never the slightest doubt about the credentials required for this: 'educated women of good position'... 'Women of tact and understanding..to handle the various classes of girls and women' living in WAAC hostels; '...only capable women of the right type'.⁹⁰ *The Times*, reporting in November 1917 that the WAAC was ready to absorb an unlimited number of women, and that the Employment Bureaux had been asked to supply 'material for the Rank and File at the rate of 10,000 a month', emphasised that administrators must be 'women of the right

type...emphatically be women of education and breeding'.⁹¹ The sort of training and experience which would best fit women for the work of WAAC administrators included domestic science training, physical training, secretarial experience, or work with girls' clubs and boarding schools.

The Times reported that HQ at Devonshire House was training suitable candidates as 'Administrators' for the WAAC as quickly as possible, and it suggested that from a recruiting standpoint it was

perhaps unfortunate that Employment Bureaux should have been selected. Well-educated women - rightly or wrongly - do not care to go to Labour Exchanges and be questioned as to their fitness for a post by a pert young clerk who does not know the difference between the Cambridge High Local and a First in Greats.⁹²

A measure of success in the recruitment of suitable officers is borne out by the remarks of a journalist visiting WAAC barracks in a country town in Britain, who described the administrators she met as 'jolly well-bred women, accustomed probably to artistic homes', who had taken to their 'bare, monastic surroundings' in a very soldierly manner.⁹³

Back in June 1917, when Mrs Chalmers Watson was trying to persuade AGXI to reconsider the rates of pay proposed for WAAC Administrators and Assistants, she stressed her own concern to secure the 'best type' of woman, and listed the classes of women they could draw on.⁹⁴ There was the 'woman of means', anxious to help, and prepared to do so for a very small salary, or even work unpaid - but only a very limited number of such women had the qualifications and experience that Mrs Chalmers Watson considered necessary. Secondly, there was the 'Professional and University Woman', trained and used to commanding a 'sufficient salary'. Thirdly, there was 'A class of

woman of the upper domestic or elementary school teacher type'.⁹⁶ Altogether, it was 'most desirable that the WAAC should be able to secure the services of well educated and cultured and experienced women for its "officers" so that the Corps has the best chance of success'.⁹⁶

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If the Employment Exchanges had cooperated more willingly with WS NSD, the latter's task might have been easier, but the staff at St Ermin's were convinced that the War Office was at least partly to blame for their failure, because of its attitude over such matters as low pay, and its inflexibility over references for potential candidates. Mrs Tennant asked National Service Commissioners to report on whether there was evidence to show that rates of pay for WAAC were not high enough to attract recruits.⁹⁷ She also asked for comments on a proposal that the rates for clerical workers for the WAAC in England were to be lower than in France. On the second issue the consensus was that the general acceptance of wages offered for service abroad was 'due to the fact that the glamour of service in France appears entirely to remove the weight of any other more personal consideration'.⁹⁸

On the question of pay, the responses varied according to area. In London the scale of salaries for the WAAC - especially for lower grade clerks at 23/- a week - was cited as a definite obstacle to enrolment, and a number of examples were provided where withdrawal from enrolment was entirely due to the pay.⁹⁹ In the West Midlands only one application up to 18 June 1917 had been withdrawn on the grounds that the rate offered was too low.¹⁰⁰ In Bristol, Southampton

and the South West, the Commissioner claimed that a large number of women had been deterred from accepting posts in the WAAC on account of pay, despite the low rates of pay in the South Western Counties compared to other parts of England. Even there, enrolment forms showed that rates paid to clerks were considerably higher than 23/-, with from 30/- to 35/- being the usual rate for experienced clerks.¹⁰¹

By contrast, Lady Rhonda,¹⁰² Commissioner to the NSD in Wales, reported that in her area no-one had been deterred from applying by low rates of pay.¹⁰³ She commented that one of the most noticeable features of the application forms was the 'utter lack of standardisation in wages'.¹⁰⁴ The Commissioner for NSD in Leeds pointed out that while there was no doubt that the rates of pay offered by the WAAC did not attract the 'best type of clerk' she did not think that the 'highly skilled type' was really wanted for the WAAC.¹⁰⁵ The Selection Board seemed at its happiest when it was engaging 'the young, bright and not highly skilled clerk who is receiving from 20/- to 26/- a week, and my own feeling is that they are getting as good a type as they actually want'.¹⁰⁶

On occasion, the War Office was forced to offer competitive wages. In the case of 48 women required by the Director of Army Printing and Stationery Services in France, for example, as a result of representations from the Union of Printing and Paper Workers the original scale of pay offered by the War Office of 21/- was increased to 25/- rising to 29/- for ordinary workers, and from 27/- to 30/- for Assistant Forewomen.¹⁰⁷ The case of the printers illustrated other criticisms made by WS NSD, of the manner in which the attitude of some staff in the War Office discouraged successful recruitment. A number

of prospective female printers sent up to Devonshire House for interview complained to Mr Jones, the Secretary of the National Union of Printing and Paper Workers, of the treatment they had received at the hands of the War Office Medical Board, and several women selected to go to France refused to do so.¹⁰⁸ As a result of the efforts of Lt. G.W. Bourne, who worked in the printing section in France, it was eventually agreed that the medical examination should be modified. Mr Jones told Mona Wilson bluntly that the previous medical examination had stopped his women offering their services:

If the men had an examination anything like it, we should have no Army. Many were told to get glasses and come again, some have obtained glasses and have not heard when to go again, others say, shall not trouble about glasses have worked in Printing Firms all our life and have not required glasses. Really you would think the examination was for a life Government Post of about £1,000 a year instead of a year's work at 25/- per week.¹⁰⁹

WS NSD was also critical of the attitude of the War Office Selection Board to the references provided by some prospective candidates. In June a Selection Board refused 11 references because questions about nationality on the WAAC application form had not been completed.¹¹⁰ But, as NSD staff pointed out, most referees refused to make a statement regarding the nationality of the parents of the candidate, and the value of those statements that were made was questionable, since they were made on the word of the applicant rather than with personal knowledge.¹¹¹

There was also the problem of the social standing of referees. The War Office Board had declined to accept certain references because they were not good enough; unsurprisingly, candidates were often most upset when such objections were raised. Unless different regulations were introduced recruitment would be severely checked. As one girl

had remarked bitterly "girls in my position do not know men of good standing".¹¹² One Gladys M. Bloodworth had given the name of a stevedore working at the Woolwich Arsenal, who had been a personal friend of the family for many years. He could speak from personal experience of the nationality of the family, which was chiefly what was required, but Gladys had been told that her reference was not good enough.¹¹³ DRI staff on the Selection Board had been approached on the matter, and asked what references they would like taken up in preference to the stevedore. Miss Bloodworth had provided particulars of three other possible referees: The Bishop of Sheffield, who had known her in Sunday School as a very small child; a Doctor - who had not seen her since birth; and a third, equally remote. The War Office representatives seemed to think any of those would be more satisfactory than the stevedore.¹¹⁴

III. The Demise of WS NSD

Despite Markham's suspicion that Chamberlain was siding with the War Office, the DG NSD did write to Lord Derby, asking for an explanation as to why the War Office was preparing a new scheme for recruiting women to be carried out by the Recruiting Offices of the War Office instead of NSD.¹¹⁶ The existing arrangements had been made in accordance with policy approved by the War Cabinet; these had been publicly announced by Derby himself at the Albert Hall, and Chamberlain felt entitled to a statement explaining the reasons why the War Office had decided to depart from the original arrangement.

In response to Chamberlain's letter Derby arranged a meeting attended by Adjutant General Macready, Auckland Geddes, Sir Charles Harris and Mrs Chalmers Watson from the War Office, with Lord Derby in the Chair and Neville Chamberlain and his four senior women staff from NSD.¹¹⁶ No outright charge was made against National Service in connection with their poor recruitment record of women clerks for the WAAC, but General Geddes described that department as 'the fifth wheel to the coach' and expressed his desire to see the whole organisation for recruiting taken over by the War Office. Despite lengthy debate, there was no clarification of the situation and Lord Derby decided to delay his final decision.

At the beginning of July Derby suggested to Chamberlain that as a solution to the difficulties a Joint Committee of War Office and National Service staff should meet on a regular basis to smooth out recruitment problems.¹¹⁷ Chamberlain welcomed the suggestion, though he objected to Derby's stricture that the Committee would not be empowered to discuss pay or conditions.¹¹⁸ Derby had also expressed

the wish that responsibility for recruiting should rest solely upon NSD. Chamberlain accepted this, but he told Derby that they had at present no machinery adequate to deal with large numbers, and he requested that 'a reasonable time would have to be allowed to this Department to develop its organisation if the demands upon us are likely to be increased to any considerable extent'.¹¹⁹

This attempt at resolution failed, and the NSD came under further attack.¹²⁰ Cecil Beck, the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the National Service Department, made a report to the Prime Minister in which he claimed that of the three main sections of NSD - Women, Agriculture, Substitution - the success of the first two was not denied; only with regard to the latter section was there cause for dispute.¹²¹ This prompted the Minister of Labour to complain that far from being successful, while NSD interference with the work of the Exchanges had been 'serious enough' in the case of the men, it had been 'most marked and most mischievous in the case of women', where there was not even the shadow of justification for setting up fresh machinery for dealing with the supply of women.¹²² Hitherto there had been an ample supply of 'women labour', supplied by the Exchanges at the rate of about 3,000 a day. If the present duplication and confusion, caused by the unnecessary activities of WS NSD in that direction were allowed to continue, the supply of labour would be so mismanaged as to become inadequate.

The formal inauguration of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was announced on 7 July,¹²³ and this may have influenced Derby's next move. The WAAC was to be 'administered generally on Army Lines'; the Military Cookery and Motor Transport Sections of the Women's Legion

were to be gradually absorbed, though existing contracts and agreements of individuals already serving would stand, and could be renewed for further periods. Provided they were fit, all women from the Women's Legion, Military Cookery and Motor Transport Sections who were willing to do so would be invited to enrol in the WAAC. WAAC already overseas, or waiting in hostels before going overseas, would also be invited to re-enrol immediately, and it was emphasised that the rates and conditions laid down in the new ACI were applicable only to women who signed the new enrolment form.¹²⁴

An abortive last-ditch attempt to establish some sort of co-operation between the War Office and WS NSD failed,¹²⁵ and Derby informed Chamberlain that he had changed his mind about the War Office using NSD to obtain women for the WAAC. He intended to pass recruiting over to the Employment Exchanges, who were confident that they would have no problem finding all the women the War Office wanted.¹²⁶ That was the end of WS NSD. On 3 August Tennant and Markham handed Chamberlain their resignations.¹²⁷ Markham complained that he accepted them 'with both hands and without one word of thanks or regret...So, as Jim (Markham's husband) remarks, you will realise that an exchange of hot meals between the Chamberlains and ourselves would appear to be unlikely at the moment'.¹²⁸ The next few weeks were spent clearing up and handing over to Miss Durham at the Employment Exchanges.¹²⁹

On 8 August Neville Chamberlain handed in his own resignation to the Prime Minister, complaining that seven weeks had passed since the Cabinet had received his Tenth Report. He had pressed them to accept the policy he recommended, and they had made no decision.¹³⁰ He could

not accept the new ruling that the work of military recruiting should be transferred from the War Office to his department;¹³¹ it meant nothing more than the erection of one branch of the War Office into a separate department whose staff would have changed khaki for civilian clothes, and he did not wish to be associated with the hollowness of such a change. Chamberlain also believed he did not have the necessary support of the Cabinet. He told his sister Hilda how glad he was to leave: he hated giving up an unfinished job, especially in such an atmosphere of failure, but under the conditions - 'that is to say, under a man like Lloyd George' - it was hopeless to go on.¹³²

How far Chamberlain was responsible for the failure of NSD is difficult to estimate.¹³³ Dilkes suggests that Chamberlain's inexperience in national politics and dealings with other government departments must have contributed, but that the real issue was 'administrative muddle with the government, and the failure of the Cabinet to back up the Director-General'.¹³⁴ It cannot have helped that from the beginning Lloyd George had taken 'a strong personal dislike' to Chamberlain.¹³⁵ Dilkes is critical of the view of Violet Markham and others that the root of the troubles of the NSD was Chamberlain's 'failure to deal with the Labour Exchanges'.¹³⁶ He considers that once the War Cabinet had decided the Exchanges were to be the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Chamberlain was never in a position to challenge that decision effectively.¹³⁷ Dilkes also claims that Markham's accusations against Chamberlain¹³⁸ were 'so far from the criticisms usually made of Chamberlain's character and methods that it is hard to exonerate her entirely from personal animus',¹³⁹ though he allows that circumstances excuse her to some

extent; with Mrs Tennant absent so much, the weight of WS NSD had fallen on her, and there had been a great deal that Chamberlain could not tell her. Markham was frustrated by 'giving able service and then, amidst attribution of false motives and accusations of incompetence, of seeing six months of burdensome toil go to waste'.¹⁴⁰ But if the women had lost confidence in their Director, the feeling was mutual.¹⁴¹

Violet Markham was only too thankful it was all over. To her colleague, Mr Jeffrey, the sole male member of WS NSD, who had been on sick leave for months, she described the collapse at St Ermin's as 'rather a desperate death agony'.¹⁴² Mr Chamberlain was entirely unfitted for his work. He was a good man, thoroughly honest and disinterested 'but I think I have had to do with no one so devoid of quick wits or lacking in the power of grasping a situation'.¹⁴³ The intrigues carried on by the Ministry of Labour had been intolerable, and she had 'no words to say what I think of the behaviour of Mr Rey and Miss Durham'.¹⁴⁴ The Employment Department had absolutely refused to cooperate with WS NSD, compelling them to recruit women independently of the state machine, which was very wasteful, for they had been driven to place costly advertisements for small numbers of special classes of women. She had urged Chamberlain to go to the Cabinet and insist upon Employment Exchange machinery being placed at his disposal, but he refused, and his alternative suggestion, of using National Service Committees for registration bodies as well as recruiting, would have created a cumbrous, costly and duplicate set of Labour Exchanges all over the country.¹⁴⁵ It was a 'sad and depressing experience. Six months of very hard work absolutely

wasted'.¹⁴⁶ It was also quite intolerable that officials should behave in the way Miss Durham and Mr Rey had done, and she understood that 'the Press campaign inaugurated by Mr Rey is something unequalled in the annals of journalism. However two can play at that game, and these worthies will have my best attention now I have a little more time to attend to them'.¹⁴⁷

Over the next weeks Markham tried to interest various newspaper editors in the difficulties WS NSD had experienced with the Ministry of Labour over their work for the WAAC, but little came of her efforts, and her heart does not really seem to have been in it. She refused an invitation from a journalist on the *Manchester Guardian*, who wanted her to address a collection of women journalists on the subject, because she thought it was unfair for a private individual to start a press campaign against other officials who were technically colleagues, however hostile.¹⁴⁸

The new post of Minister of National Service was offered to Auckland Geddes.¹⁴⁹ In September the War Cabinet approved the proposals of Lord Milner's Committee on Man-Power and Recruiting, which defined the functions of the Ministry of National Service, and set out a scheme for sharing responsibility between that ministry and the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour.¹⁵⁰ The Minister of National Service was to be responsible for the general policy to be followed in making labour available and in utilising it to the best advantage. The Employment Department and the Employment Exchanges would remain under control of the Minister of Labour,¹⁵¹ but would work in 'close cooperation' with the Ministry of National Service. The registering, enrolling, allocating and transferring of both male

and female labour was to be performed only by the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour, through the Employment Exchanges. Ironically, Mr Rey was moved from the Ministry of Labour and appointed Director-General of National Labour Supply in the Ministry of National Service.¹⁵²

As for the effect on recruitment of this change in office, it seems that the WAAC and the newly formed Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) competed effectively with other industries. In the period October 1917 - April 1918 there was a decrease in the number of women employed in transport and government establishment, compared with the preceding quarters, and among the possible contributory causes of this decrease, according to Kirkaldy, was the fact that QMAAC and WRNS had proved attractive to 'vigorous and patriotic recruits'.¹⁵³

Not everyone was satisfied with the methods of the Employment Exchanges, as correspondence between Miss Durham and Sir George Riddell of the Weekly Newspapers and Periodical Proprietors' Association indicates. In September the War Office informed the Employment Department that it wanted 10,000 women for the WAAC by the end of October 1917, for both home and abroad, and after that women would be required at a rate of at least 10,000 a month.¹⁵⁴ In an effort to boost WAAC recruitment, the Employment Department organised a publicity campaign.¹⁵⁵ This drew the scorn of Sir George Riddell, who complained to Frances Durham that the proprietors of such ladies' papers as *The Queen*, *Ladies' Pictorial*, *The Gentlewoman*, *Home Notes*, *Home Chat* and *Woman's Life* resented the fact that they had not been included in the advertising scheme for the WAAC, when their publications not only had very considerable circulations but were read

almost exclusively by women.¹⁵⁶ A meeting with Durham did nothing to reassure him, and he complained to the War Office that the declaration in the WAAC Regulation booklet was 'a most ridiculous document... calculated to frighten any person who is asked to sign it'.¹⁵⁷ The Army Council evidently thought they were endeavouring to recruit lawyers or university professors, not cooks, house-maids and charwomen, and he added, somewhat patronisingly, that he wondered whether a charwoman knew what a 'category' was.

Undeterred by the lack of response to his criticisms, Riddell suggested to Durham that she should ask Mrs Pankhurst to appeal to women to join the Corps.¹⁵⁸ Durham replied that she could not call on political organisations for help.¹⁵⁹ Riddell retorted that it was not the time to talk about parties; when the male Army was being recruited all the political organisations worked together hand in hand, and their aid was freely sought. Why should they not follow the same plan for women? Durham had asked him 'to be good and not to criticise', but at such times as these one had to run the risk of offending even charming ladies.¹⁶⁰ Riddell then turned to Sir Auckland Geddes, explaining that he had urged Durham 'to avail herself of the services of the various women's societies, but evidently the British Empire is to be ruined rather than that officials should step outside the limits of etiquette and prescription'.¹⁶¹ Geddes reassured Riddell that his Ministry had plans to tackle the problem of securing women for work with Government Departments, though he did not comment on the desirability or otherwise of using women's political organisations to help recruit.¹⁶²

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 7 [Pages 170 to 205]

1. The Labour Exchanges (as they were called until September 1916) were established by the Labour Exchanges Act, which was introduced as part of Lloyd George's Liberal budget of May 1909. The Act became law on 20 September 1909. The exchanges had been unanimously recommended in the Reports of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and Relief of Distress and were developed by Beveridge and Churchill to help solve the problem of unemployment and underemployment in Edwardian England. The first 61 Exchanges opened on 1 February 1910, and by the end of 1912, 414 Labour Exchanges had been set up around the country. The Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Branch was at first part of the Board of Trade. When, in 1916, the Board of Trade was transformed into the Ministry of Labour, the Exchanges were renamed Employment Exchanges, and became part of the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour.

Whatever the success of the Exchanges, they came under frequent attack. An article in *The Spectator* in 1916 claimed that before the war they had proved a 'complete failure' and were virtually boycotted by good workmen, who knew they could always get work through old channels, and that only inferior workers used the Labour Exchanges. This in turn affected the attitude of employers, for the use of Exchanges was optional. *The Spectator*, 25 November 1916; Lord Beveridge, *Power and Influence* (1953) pp. 76 - 9; W.H. Beveridge, *Unemployment - A Problem of Industry (1909 - 1930)*, (1930 edition) pp. 295 - 303; *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Work of the Employment Exchanges* (1920), Cmd. Paper 1054.

2. See Appendix VII for biographical details.
3. Frances Durham described the task of recruiting women from the outset 'the cause of great confusion and difficulty', and she claimed that the Women's Branch NSD at first assumed much wider responsibility and control than AGXI was prepared to concede. Frances Durham, 'Memorandum dealing with points raised in Mrs Tennant's letter to Mr Shackleton, 4 May 1917', PRO LAB 2/237/ED40620/30.
4. C.F. Rey had been appointed General Manager of Labour Exchanges when they were first set up at the beginning of 1910, and he had travelled round the country with Beveridge, the Director of Labour Exchanges, searching out suitable buildings for local offices. Considering the length of time Rey had been working for the Labour Exchanges, and the extent of his commitment to their original aim, it is perhaps not surprising that Rey resented those who considered the Exchanges were second-rate organisations, incapable of supplying the manpower needs of the War Office. Lord Beveridge, *Power and Influence* op. cit., pp. 77 - 88.
5. Violet Markham, *Return Passage*, op. cit., p. 150.

6. Ibid., p. 151. Markham quoted Sir Robert Morant as saying that even in peace-time, with all the resources of the Civil Service behind it, it took 12 - 18 months to get the mechanics of a new department in working order. Any new department was bound to sit on the preserves and prerogatives of existing departments, who would 'fight in the last ditch for what they thought were their rights'. Lloyd George's own description of how Chamberlain got the appointment is hardly flattering. Montagu was offered the job but refused - 'and we eventually fell back on Mr Neville Chamberlain. He was appointed in a hurry...I had never seen him, and I accepted his qualifications for the post on the recommendation of those who had heard of his business and municipal experience'. *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, Vol. III*, op. cit., p. 1357.
7. Markham, *Return Passage*, op. cit. p. 150.
8. Chamberlain tried to persuade the War Cabinet that he should take over the Exchanges, but the Cabinet eventually decided that they should remain under the control of the Minister of Labour, who undertook to put them at the disposal of the Director of National Service. See pp. 201 - 2.
9. *Daily News and Leader*, 2 March 1917, PRO LAB 2/237/ED40620/30.
10. It was such a small request that the women did not have to pass a Selection Board, though Leigh Wood asked NSD to send six candidates to a medical exam on 13 March; the extra candidates would allow for rejection. Leigh Wood reported that Lady Dudley, the Superintendent of the organisation dealing with Officers' Clubs in France, was 'personally supervising the arrangements for the Accommodation and comfort of women employed in the Clubs'. Lt Col J. Leigh Wood to DGNS, 14 March 1917, PRO NATS 1/78 (File W/100/2).
11. J. Leigh Wood to D of R, 16 March 1917, Ibid.
12. See Appendix I.
13. 4 April 1917 is the day given that the first batch of WAAC left for France in *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War 1914 - 1918*, (March 1922) HMSO War Office. Other dates have been suggested: H. Gwynne Vaughan gives 31 March 1917 as the date that the first draft of 14 WAAC arrived in France (14 cooks and waitresses for the officers' club at Abbeville; and 4 April as the date the next contingent arrived, for the officers' club at Boulogne. H. Gwynne Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, op. cit., p. 27. 7 April 1917, is the date given in Memo to V. Markham, 8 August 1917, PRO NATS 1/78 [W/100/2 (W6303)]. Most of the first WAAC to go to France had been members of the Women's Legion.
14. Telegrams to all Commands, 6 April 1917, IWM Army 37/6,7,8,9,10. A conference was held at Devonshire House on 10 April 1917, attended by representatives of British Commands, Lt Col. J. Leigh Wood, A.C. Geddes, D of R, Mrs Chalmers Watson, Commandant

- of WAAC, Capt. G. Russell, Capt. T.F. Watson, Mrs B. Leach and Miss Holmes for the Army Pay Dept. in WO. IWM Army 37/11 - 13.
15. Conference, 10 April 1917, *ibid*.
 16. J. Leigh Wood, Lt. Col. AAG, *Memorandum on the proceedings of Conference of April 10 1917*, 12 April 1917, IWM Army 37/15.
 17. Conference, 10 April 1917, *op cit*.
 18. Leigh Wood reported this figure and he also claimed that by 10 April 1917 some 13,875 women had been registered by WS NSD. Agenda I of Meeting April 10 1917, IWM Army 37/13.
 19. J. Leigh Wood, *Memo on Conference of April 10*, *op. cit*.
 20. *Ibid*.
 21. *Ibid*.
 22. Mrs Chalmers Watson, *Comments on Leigh Wood's Report of Conference of 10 April*, 14 April 1917, IWM Army 37/14.
 23. A draft Defence of the Realm Regulation 42(c) was sent to Lord Derby for approval in April. Director of Personal Services (DPS) W.A. Bland to Secretary of State, Minute 20, 19 April 1917, PRO WO32/5254. *The Times*, 12 May 1917: DORA '...if any person (not being a member of any of His Majesty's naval or military forces) enrolled after May 10 [1917] for employment by the Army Council (a) without lawful excuse absents himself from any work which it is his duty to perform or from any place where it is his duty to be; or 9b) refuses or wilfully neglects to perform any of his duties; or (c) wilfully impedes or delays the due performance of any work on or in connexion with which he may be employed; he shall be guilty of a summary offence against these regulations'.
 24. Director WS NSD to Sir Reginald Brade, WO, 14 May 1917, (File W/100/2 Part II) PRO NATS 1/78 .
 25. R. Brade, WO to Mrs Tennant, WS NSD, *ibid*.
 26. In the circumstances, it is odd that the regulation did not refer more directly to women. Throughout, all references are to 'he' and 'him' when at the time it was enacted, according to Brade, it had relevance only to 'she' and 'her'.
 27. Brade's reply to Mrs Tennant was almost identical to a reply by Mr Macpherson in the House of Commons, on 5 June 1917, when Labour MP Anderson asked the Under Secretary of State for War whether the Army Council had applied for the services of women to perform military telegraph work in France; whether they would wear uniform and be under military control; whether they would be liable to punishment for offences against rules, and if so, what form of punishment? 94HC, 5s, 5 June 1917, Cols. 27 - 8.

28. DPS to Secretary of State for War, Minute 20, 19 April 1917, PRO WO32/5254.
29. Directorate of Organisation, *History 1914 - 1918*, PRO WO162/6, p. 581. It continued: 'The Corps at Home has generally been dealt with on a Civilian basis, as the Members were servants of the Army Council held by a Civilian contract'.
30. Macready, A.G., Minute 3, 11 March 1917, PRO WO32/5254.
31. CH to FM, Minute 4, 15 March 1917, Ibid.
32. The 'ladies' under discussion were the two Chief Controllers for Home and France - Mrs Chalmers Watson and Helen Gwynne Vaughan, and the Controller of Women's Medical Service.
33. Ibid.
34. AG to FM, Minute 8, 23 March 1917, PRO WO32/5254. Where AG had proposed £650 pa for Chief Controller and Deputy Chief Controller, FM proposed £450; where AG proposed £715 for Woman Controller of Medical Services - the pay of a Lt. Col. in the RAMC - FM proposed just £400. Memo 7A, WO32/5254.
35. Macready to Lord Derby, Minute 10, 27 March 1917, Ibid.
36. FM to Sec. of State, Minute 11, 28 March 1917, Ibid.
37. Lord Derby, Minute 12, 30 March 1917, Ibid.
38. Precis of Conference held in Deputy Director of Organisation's Room, 5 May 1917, PRO WO32/5253.
39. Macready to FM, 8 May 1917; H.W. Forster to A.G., Minute 2, 9 May 1917, Ibid.
40. W.S. Perry to DO, Minute 13, 19 May 1917, Ibid.
41. AG to FM, Minute 14, 19 May 1917, Ibid. The four essential points on which they had to come to a decision were: that the scheme would be extended gradually throughout England (which AG had always understood was the intention, and thought the Secretary of State had the same idea); the extension of women's work to recruiting, records and other offices - Perry had claimed in a previous minute that there was no intention to extend it to those offices; that whatever system or rates of pay was decided upon, there would be no overtime; that there would be a flat rate for deductions of accommodation.
42. FM to AG, Minute 15, 22 May 1917, PRO WO32/5253.
43. FM to AG, 24 May 1917, PRO WO32/5530.
44. Ibid.

45. Conference 25 May 1917, PRO WO162/34. Members of WAAC would be enrolled and uniformed; WAAC would be accommodated under War Office arrangements; those employed near their homes, except in the Cookery Section, would continue to live at home; pay of all women would be on a weekly or yearly rate; no pay for overtime; no definite number of hours per day or week stated, but for computation of rates 48 hours per week taken; a flat rate of 14/- per week Home and Abroad deducted for board and lodging and washing from women accommodated under War Department arrangements; all women employed as clerks in Pay Offices in France would be members of WAAC.
46. *Evening News*, 2 April 1917.
47. F. Durham, 'Notes on Conference with National Service Department on 1st May 1917', PRO LAB 2/237/ED40620/30.
48. Ibid.
49. D. Shackleton to Tennant, 3 May 1917, PRO LAB 2/237/ED40620/30.
50. Ibid.
51. Tennant to Shackleton, 4 May 1917, PRO NATS 1/76.
52. Lilian Clapham to Markham, 16 May 1917, 'Women Clerical Workers for France; Report on the General Position as to the number of Women Clerks already supplied to the War Office up to May 15 and statement as to the Scarcity of Further Candidates', PRO NATS 1/78. The War Office required 5,000 women clerical staff for France, at the rate of 250 a week, of whom 1,180 were needed by the end of May. Mona Wilson to Tennant, 7 May 1917, PRO NATS 1/76.
53. Clapham to Markham, 16 May 1917, op. cit.
54. The War Office had asked WS NSD to hold 3 boards a week in London alone, and for these there were practically no candidates. It was little better elsewhere. Selection Boards for women clerks arranged to be held in Brighton in June had to be cancelled owing to the poor response to the publicity campaign to attract women clerks in Brighton and other south coast Towns. A. Collins, Gen. Sect., NSD to Sec. DR WO, 1 June 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
55. Conference at Devonshire House, 16 May 1917, PRO WO162/34.
56. AGXI 'A' was responsible for administration, organisation, welfare, discipline, legal questions, discharges, rates of pay, medical questions; AGXI 'Q' for accommodation, quartering, clothing, rations; AGXI 'R' for recruiting and reinforcements, inspection, distribution, liaison with Ministry of Labour, Statistics, training, posting of administrators and movement. Directorate of Organisation, *History 1914 - 1918*, op. cit.

57. Lt. Col. E.J. Scovell, AMG for D of R; to all District Commands, 22 May 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
58. V. Markham to Mrs Tennant, 7 June 1917, LSE Markham 4/5. At this time Tennant was absent from her department because of the death of her elder son at the end of May, killed while flying in France.
59. V. Markham to N. Chamberlain, 4 June 1917, Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. As evidence, Markham described how the *Weekly Bulletin* of 31 May 1917 (an official document circulated by DR1) forecast optimistically that 'Recruiting Officers will find no reluctance on the part of the women of the country to taking up work with the Army abroad and at home'. Markham pointed out that their experience did not bear this out at all, unless the War Office proposed to free themselves from conditions which bound NSD.
62. V. Markham to N. Chamberlain, 4 June 1917, *ibid.*
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. V. Markham to Tennant, 7 June 1917, *op. cit.*
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Board of Trade *Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War*, *op. cit.*
70. Great Britain Home Office, 'Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1916', p. 6, quoted in Osgood Andrews and Hobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
71. Ibid.
72. These figures are taken from Kirkaldy, *Industry and Finance*, Table on p. 8.
73. Ibid., p. 9.
74. Ibid., p. 3.
75. Andrews and Hobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
76. Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, *The Position of Women After the War*, quoted in Andrews and Hobbs., Ibid.

77. Ibid., p. 75.
78. Dilkes, op. cit., p. 225. * Footnote reference to J. Hodge to Lloyd George, 13 March 1917, LG Papers F/27/5/1.
79. Andrews and Hobbs, op. cit., p. 75.
80. For brief discussion of the difficulties of 'class' identification, see Appendix III.
81. The 'rank and file' of the WAAC were called 'members'; the officers were called administrators.
82. Winifred Holtby, 'Letters to The Editor', *Time and Tide*, 16 May, 1930.
83. M. Tennant and V. Markham, Memo, 25 March 1917, LSE Markham 4/5.
84. N. Chamberlain to Henderson, 29 March 1917, LSE Markham 4/5.
85. Mona Wilson to Miss Tennant, 4 July 1917, LSE Markham 4/5.
86. Lord Derby to Neville Chamberlain, 21 July 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
87. Gilbert Stone (ed), *Women War Workers*, 1917, p. 285.
88. Notes by J.S. Henry as a result of a Tour of Enquiry, National Service, 16 November 1917, PRO NATS 1/78. Henry had enlisted the services of 'a number of ladies', for the purpose of enquiring whether or not recruiting for WAAC should be placed 'on a higher standard'. The ladies had visited various Employment Bureaux. His enquiries showed that there was a difference in reception accorded to well dressed women, as compared with woman not so fashionably attired.
89. 'Confidential' Memo, unsigned, February 1918, PRO NATS 1/76.
90. *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 12 October 1917; Edith Barton, 'The Transition of Eve - II', *Ladies Pictorial*. [IWM Printed Records, Press Cuttings, WAAC].
91. *The Times*, 6 November 1917.
92. Ibid.
93. Eleanor Gordon, 'The WAACS: Making Soldiers of Girls', *Daily Chronicle*, 1 October 1917.
94. Mrs Chalmers Watson to AGXI, 4 June 1917, PRO WO32/5254.
95. Ibid. She noted that Elementary School Teachers received between £75 - £130 p.a.
96. Ibid.

97. For example, Minute to Lady Mackworth, 19 June 1917; L. Brock to Miss Wilson, 18 June 1917; G.M. Bebb, Commissioner West Midland Area to Miss Wilson, 18 June 1917, PRO NATS 1/76.
98. G.M. Bebb to Wilson, *ibid.*
99. Brock to Wilson, 18 June 1917, *op. cit.*
100. G.M. Bebb to Wilson, *op. cit.*
101. M. Beer, Minute, 20 June 1917, PRO NATS 1/76.
102. See Appendix VII for biographical details.
103. M.H. Mackworth to Miss Clapham, 20 June 1917, PRO NATS 1/76.
104. *Ibid.*
105. E.G. Woodgate to Miss Wilson, Minute, 23 June 1917, *ibid.*
106. *Ibid.*
107. Memorandum 3 May 1917, Interview with representatives of National Union of Printing and Paper Workers, Women Printers in the Army, (File W6303/1A) PRO NATS 1/78 and H. Hincks, Captain, D of R to DGNS WS, *ibid.*
108. L. Clapham, WS NSD, Memo., 17 May 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
109. G. Jones to M. Wilson, NSD, 23 May 1917, File W6303/1a *ibid.*
110. L. Brock to Miss Wilson, 16 June 1917, PRO NATS 1/76. (CHECK)
111. L. Brock suggested that the difficulty could be solved by asking for birth certificates. *Ibid.*
112. *Ibid.*
113. *Ibid.*
114. G. Emmot to Miss Wilson, 20 June 1917, *Ibid.*
115. N. Chamberlain to Earl of Derby, 9 June 1917, LSE Markham 4/5.
116. Derby to Chamberlain, 13 June 1917, PRO NATS 1/78; WAAC Conference 26 June 1917, PRO NATS 1/79.
117. Lord Derby to N. Chamberlain, 3 July 1917, PRO NATS 1/76.
118. N. Chamberlain to Lord Derby, 6 July 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
119. *Ibid.*
120. At this time Lord Milner was still investigating the relationship between the Ministry of Labour and NSD. He believed there should be a complete change of the existing

system, possibly with the unification of Employment Exchanges and NSD. Lord Milner to Violet Markham, 7 July 1917, LSE Markham 4/9.

121. C. Beck to Lloyd George, Memo on National Service, 10 July 1917, HLRO LG/87/5/1. Beck was appointed by Lloyd George without notifying Chamberlain. Lloyd George to N. Chamberlain, 4 July 1917, BU NC8/5/5/1. See also Dilkes, op. cit., p. 237.
122. J. Hodges, Memo on National Service, 12 July 1917, HLRO LG/87/5/1.
123. Army Council Instruction No. 1069, 7 July 1917. ACI 537 of 28 March 1917 had stated only that 'The employment of women at the Base and on Lines of Communication abroad has been approved'.
124. The new enrolment form warned applicants that if, in breach of contract, they absented themselves from any work, or place where they should be, refused or neglected to perform duties or impede or delay work in which employed, they were liable on conviction by a Court of summary jurisdiction to be sentenced to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding six months, or to a fine not exceeding £100, or both imprisonment and fine. The women were to serve for a period of twelve months or for the duration of the war, whichever was longer, but their services could be terminated forthwith on grounds of misconduct or breach of conditions, on receipt of notice by the Army Council, or, if their services were no longer required, be terminated by one week's notice in writing being given to them. Army Form W. 3578, Appendix A to ACI 1069.
125. Conference 16 July 1917, PRO WO162/34. Markham described the meeting as 'a regular cocked-hat affair', with Hodge 'rather rude and abusive', talking of WS NSD's failure, and the soldiers not saying much, though their sympathies were clearly with the Labour Department. Markham, 17 July 1917, LSE Markham 4/5.
126. Derby to Chamberlain, 21 July 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
127. Tennant to Chamberlain, 3 August 1917, Ibid.
128. Markham to Clapham, 6 August 1917, LSE Markham 4/6.
129. N. Chamberlain to Lloyd George, 8 August 1917, BU NC8/5/2/31; 10th Report from DG NSD, Paper G.T. 1176, War Cabinet 185, PRO CAB 23/3.
130. On 1 August 1917 the War Cabinet discussed a memo prepared by A.C. Geddes, Director of Recruiting at the War Office. His proposals included the transfer of recruiting for the Army to a civilian organisation, and the Cabinet agreed that this should be carried out, and that the new organisation should be placed under an existing department. The War Cabinet considered whether the recruiting organisation should be part of the Local Government Board, NSD or Ministry of Labour, and it was agreed that NSD should be the authority. (War Cabinet 201 PRO CAB

- 24/22). In a year events had come full circle. The Cabinet also agreed that a committee should be formed, with powers on behalf of the War Cabinet, to decide all questions of recruiting and manpower, and to report its decisions to the War Cabinet. A few days later Lord Derby wrote to Lloyd George, suggesting that Auckland Geddes should head a new manpower board, to replace NSD. (Derby to Lloyd George, 6 August 1917, LRC 920 DER (17)17/1-WO). A year earlier General Macready had called for a manpower board, with similar responsibilities, and the NSD had taken over from that board.
131. The transfer of work from WS NSD to the Ministry of Labour was completed by 13 August and Violet Markham left on 17 August, having produced a report of their work which she claimed showed them in a much better position than she had realised. V. Markham to J. Jeffrey, 20 August 1917, LSE Markham 4/9.
 132. N. Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 12 August 1917, BU NC 18/1/121.
 133. Pat Thane suggests that because Dilkes relies so heavily on Chamberlain's own correspondence as a source, it is impossible to evaluate his own contribution to the failure of NSD. Review, *History Today* (August 1985), p. 58.
 134. Dilkes, op. cit., pp. 191, 196, 245.
 135. Ibid., p. 195.
 136. Ibid., p. 220.
 137. Ibid., p. 221. See below, footnote 145.
 138. Markham had blamed him for 'lacking quick wits and the power of grasping a situation, the ability to run an administration and the will to fight his department's battles'. Ibid., p. 247.
 139. Ibid.
 140. Ibid.
 141. Chamberlain told Markham that if the women's section did not undertake recruiting for the WAAC there would be no point in perpetuating it. Dilkes suggests that Markham probably 'failed to realise what effect would be produced on Chamberlain by her own insistence that the women's section could handle recruiting only with the full use of the Exchanges, or to understand that nothing of the kind was likely to be secured'. Ibid., p. 240.
 142. V. Markham to J. Jeffrey, 10 August 1917, LSE Markham 4/6.
 143. Ibid.
 144. Ibid. Dilkes quotes a letter written by N. Chamberlain, in which he claims that Rey was at the root of at least part of his troubles: he describes 'a senior man [at the Ministry of Labour]

"who makes trouble everywhere and is universally disliked because he is a mischievous chatterbox, always boasting, lying and intriguing. It is a pity that we should have been handicapped as we have been from the very beginning by such a man."'. Dilkes, op. cit., p. 229. Dilkes describes Rey as having 'been regarded by all the leading figures at the Department of National Service as the main cause of rancidity and misfortune'. Ibid., p. 230.

145. See p. 201 for Dilkes' view that Markham was wrong to insist that the root of troubles lay in Chamberlain's failure to deal with the Labour Exchanges. I am unconvinced by Dilkes' argument that Chamberlain's position was never strong enough to insist upon transfer or integration; he did not need a strong position to *insist*; he could have stated that if they were not transferred to his control, he would resign. This would have indicated the strength of his own conviction on the matter; it was his apparent inability to stand up for what he believed was necessary that infuriated Violet Markham.
146. V. Markham to J. Jeffrey, 10 August 1917, op. cit.
147. Ibid. See also Dilkes op. cit., p. 241.
148. Markham to Miss Isitt, 19 August 1917, LSE Markham 4/9. Also Markham to Phillips, *Yorkshire Post*, 9 August 1917; Markham to C.P. Scott, *Manchester Guardian* 19 August 1917; H.A. Gwynne, *Morning Post* to Markham, 20 August 1917; J.A. Spender to Markham, 18 August 1917 LSE Markham 4/9.
149. Geddes was given the status of Cabinet Minister, with a seat in parliament. Dilkes, op. cit., p. 242 - 4.
150. Committee on Man-Power and Recruiting, *Report to War Cabinet, 'Agreement between the Ministry of National Service and the Ministry of Labour'*, 10 September, 1917, *Appendix 1 G.T. 2001*, PRO T1/12129/3534/18. War Cabinet 231 [confirming decision of Lord Milner's Committee on Man-Power and Recruiting], 12 September 1917, PRO T1/12129/3534/18.
151. In August 1917 G.H. Roberts replaced John Hodge as Minister of Labour.
152. 'Agreement between the Ministry of National Service and the Ministry of Labour', 10 September 1917, op. cit. Violet Markham passed on information to Lord Milner about both Rey and Durham, which may have influenced decisions taken by Milner's Committee. Dilkes, op. cit., p. 241.
153. Kirkaldy, op. cit., pp. 3 - 4.
154. F. Durham, Ministry of Labour Employment Department to Colonel Corsellis, 14 September 1917, PRO WO162/34. Also *Glasgow Herald*, 15 September 1917; *The Times*, 18 September 1917; *The Star*, 18 September 1917.

155. Durham to Corsellis, 14 September 1917, op. cit.
156. Sir George Riddell to Frances Durham, 19 September 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
157. Sir George Riddell to Sir Reginald Brade, 22 October 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
158. Sir George Riddell to Frances Durham, 6 November 1917, *ibid.*
159. Sir George Riddell to Frances Durham, 10 November 1917, *ibid.*
160. *Ibid.*
161. Sir George Riddell to Sir Auckland Geddes, 15 November 1917, *ibid.*
162. Sir Auckland Geddes to Sir George Riddell, 19 November 1917, *ibid.*

CHAPTER 8

A NATIONAL WOMEN'S CORPS?

The WAAC, with its close identification and relationship with the regular army, provided a model for the organisation of women in 'State Service'; but debate continued about the desirability of forming a single national women's corps to serve all government departments, civil and military, which wanted to employ large numbers of women. The chief advocate of this strategy was the new Women's Department of the Ministry of National Service, which was established early in 1918. The Admiralty soon made its preference clear: following army precedent it set up its own women's corps. The failure of the Ministry of National Service to achieve a single organisation of women was one of several disappointments: Violet Markham and others were unsuccessful in their attempts to persuade the government to establish a Woman Power Board run by women, while demands for the introduction of compulsory national service for women also failed.

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In October 1917 the Admiralty, who had been employing women in Naval establishments for some time, decided to introduce substitution on a wider scale and in a more comprehensive and systematic manner, and informed the Ministry of National Service of its decision.¹ Up till now, the Navy had engaged female labour locally, mainly as clerks and typists, in various ports and bases. Rates of pay, based on local rates, varied, and no uniform had been permitted. Now the Admiralty was persuaded to act because it believed that difficulties would arise

if it had to compete with other government departments, which were also increasing the numbers of women they employed. The Admiralty suggested two possible methods of proceeding: it could form a Women's Naval Auxiliary Corps on the lines of the WAAC, or, alternatively, a National Corps of Women Workers could be formed, which would absorb both WAAC and women employed on naval service. If a National Women's Corps was formed, women detailed for naval service should wear navy blue uniform, and those for the Army, khaki. The matter was urgent, and the Admiralty asked the Minister of National Service to let them know his views as soon as possible.

A single women's corps, to provide women for all government departments which required them, had, of course, been the basis of Katharine Furse's original scheme. In August 1917, after the WAAC had been extended to Britain, Colonel Corsellis had suggested that the time was ripe to form one organisation for all women who worked full-time for the Army.² Nothing came of Corsellis's plan, but when the Admiralty raised the subject of a single women's corps it became a matter of contention between the departments concerned.

The Minister of National Service thought a national corps of women workers should be created, comprising the WAAC and women employed on naval service; the general administration of this corps should be under his department.³ The Employment Department supported the Admiralty proposal for a national corps, but was emphatic that recruitment for such a corps be carried out by the Employment Exchanges under the Ministry of Labour.⁴ The War Office was the least enthusiastic. The Army Council told the Ministry of National Service that while the formation of a 'National Corps of Women Workers' might

be 'very desirable' on the termination of war, during the war it would be better to have separate Corps for both Navy and Army: this would 'effect a more rapid and elastic means of recruiting, organising and administering the large number of women required'.⁵

In November Auckland Geddes presented the War Cabinet with a paper on the 'Recruitment and Organisation of Women enrolled for Work of National Importance',⁶ in which he complained of the lack of coordination, and the lack of uniformity in rates of pay and other conditions.⁷ Geddes claimed that more than 80 different groups were in active competition for women, and no attempt had been made to determine priority of demand. The result was a waste of money and effort, and abuses arose from the lack of proper supervision. In order to rectify the situation, Geddes asked the War Cabinet to give him the responsibility for controlling the general policy with regard to the recruiting of women.

Before the War Cabinet discussed Geddes's request, a conference was held, which was attended by representatives from most of the government departments who recruited women, at which it was agreed that central control 'was not impossible', and that the Ministry of National Service should prepare a scheme to be discussed with other government departments.⁸ At the Cabinet meeting on 29 November it was agreed that: 'The Minister of National Service should be responsible for controlling the recruiting of all women for work of national importance', and that the co-ordination required in connection with wages to be paid to such women should be referred to a Co-ordinating Committee.⁹

In order to put into effect the War Cabinet decision, the Ministry of National Service asked the Treasury for permission to create a new branch under a Deputy Director General, who would be responsible to the Director General of National Labour Supply for all questions concerning the control of recruiting of women.¹⁰ Geddes proposed that Lieutenant Colonel Corsellis, at present in charge of the organisation and administration of the WAAC, should be appointed Deputy Director General of the new women's department: Corsellis, he claimed, possessed 'in a very special degree the necessary qualifications and experience for this very difficult post'.¹¹ The Treasury was unenthusiastic, but reluctantly approved this appointment,¹² and in January 1918 Lady Mackworth was appointed Chief Controller of Women's Recruiting.¹³

In his new role, Colonel Corsellis became involved in trying to set up a central women's corps, and over the following months he, Lady Mackworth and Mr Rey drafted and redrafted a ubiquitous 'Scheme for Central Control of Women's Recruiting'.¹⁴ The Treasury resolutely refused to agree to extend the Ministry of National Service's control over the recruitment of women, would not sanction the proposed expenditure, and claimed that the Ministry of Employment was doing the work quite satisfactorily, at far less cost.¹⁵ A member of the Treasury remarked caustically 'The Ministry of National Service is starting the same useless schemes for which Neville Chamberlain made himself ridiculous'.¹⁶

'Central Control' of recruiting did not necessarily mean the end of individual women's corps; indeed, the Minister of National Service himself emphatically denied rumours that his department intended to

put the whole of women's work under one organisation.¹⁷ But to implement its scheme the Ministry claimed the right to decide priorities between the different corps;¹⁸ an assumption of control unpopular with both the War Office and the Admiralty. Combined with continuing uncertainty about the readiness of its proposed recruitment scheme, and the formation of two more women's corps who identified closely with the military services to which they were attached,¹⁹ the establishment of central control proved elusive.

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While the Admiralty contemplated whether or not to form its own women's corps, Katharine Furse faced a personal crisis. In August she had asked Sir Arthur Stanley for permission to put Lilian Clapham²⁰ in charge of a General Service VAD Scheme. At first Stanley had agreed, but later he criticised Furse for bringing in a woman who was not a VAD member, and who was closely connected with the Ministry of Labour. This was not his only grievance. He wrote to Furse in October, expressing his resentment at the idea of the VAD organisation being merged into the larger Women's Army, and complaining that Clapham's influence would undoubtedly be used in that direction.²¹ Much the happiest time and the best work had been done during the first two years, 'while we were all thinking of VADs and nothing else. Now I fear that Devonshire House - or at all events some of the people there - are thinking more of the Women's Army and less of the VADs'.²² Stanley asked Furse to meet him to talk: it was not a matter they could very well deal with by letter.

In response to an enquiry by Lloyd George, Lord Derby told the Prime Minister that there was a great deal of trouble brewing between

the VAD and the Joint War Committee of the Red Cross and St John of Jerusalem, of which his brother, Arthur Stanley, was Chairman.²³ Derby reported that 'the real truth is that the Voluntary aid has now become divided into two classes, the paid and the unpaid'. Mrs Furse was anxious that the paid class, 'who are more of the servant class, should come over lock, stock and barrel to our women's organisation. The Joint Committee is not prepared, at all events at present, to agree to that, and as theirs is the money which keeps the VAD going, they naturally have the right to call the tune'.²⁴ Derby thought it was quite possible that Mrs Furse might resign, but expressed the view that that would not be an 'unmixed evil' from their point of view, as he thought she would come into the Army organisation. He would consult with his brother on the subject, and would 'endeavour to smooth matters down to the best of my ability'.²⁵

Relations between Furse and Sir Arthur Stanley did not improve. Furse sent Markham an outline she had prepared of a planned reorganisation of VAD, which she claimed had angered Sir Arthur mainly because she proposed to remove part of the VAD organisation from Red Cross and St John.²⁶ Furse believed that if what she described as 'a really great scheme for Organisation of a body of women for service under the State' was evolved, the auxiliary side of VAD (that is, unpaid VAD members serving in Auxiliary Hospitals) should be brought into it. A good many shirkers were sheltering under VAD uniform, and many smaller hospitals could be closed for economy. Everything was 'extraordinarily complicated' and 'hopelessly wasteful'. She had been very miserable, but now that she felt 'Wise and level-headed people outside' supported her, she was less unhappy and believed that in

being loyal to the country she was not necessarily disloyal to the Red Cross and Order of St John.

The matter came to a head at the end of October. Furse wrote to all the members of the Central Joint VAD Committee, complaining that over the past eighteen months she had pressed for certain essential reforms which had not been undertaken.²⁷ The situation was complicated by the advent of the WAAC: the creation of a corps under state control, and its attractions to women keen to undertake work of national importance, affected the position of VAD profoundly. Both WAAC and VAD drew on similar types of labour, and the WAAC was a 'formidable competitor', which attracted women who might otherwise have joined the VAD. It was either competition or cooperation: clearly, cooperation was more desirable. Crucially, Furse was dissatisfied with her own duties. She believed that her original brief as Commandant-in-Chief²⁸ meant that she was responsible for welfare and discipline. Lately the functions of both Commandant-in-Chief and the VAD department at Devonshire House had come to be simply those of a Registry, and if this continued, the office of Commandant-in-Chief should be abolished.

On 30 October Furse sent Stanley a copy of the memo she had sent to all members of Central Joint VAD, and repeated that she could not continue to hold her present office unless the general principle of cooperation with WAAC was accepted by Red Cross and St John authorities, together with the reforms for which she pressed.²⁹ If she had thought that the threat of her leaving would persuade the Joint VAD Committee to agree to her terms, she was mistaken. Two days later Stanley wrote and told her that he had submitted her letter and

Memo to a special meeting of the Committee that morning: the Committee had agreed that her suggestions were not in accord with the lines set down in ACIs 1069 and 1330, and it would stick by that policy even if it meant that Furse resigned.³⁰ Furse was furious, and told Stanley she would not accept the authority of a Special Committee which had met without an agenda for a meeting called without proper notice being given, and she would only resign if the whole VAD Committee, properly convened, took the same decision.³¹

News of the disagreement spread. Furse received a note from A. Maude Royden,³² expressing sympathy and offering her services. Furse told her that the only way she could help was by telling

women who are interested in women that in spite of an almost ceaseless struggle we have not succeeded in convincing the Red Cross and Order of St John that it is advisable that the Welfare and Control of women VAD members should be invested in women VAD officers, and not in men throughout the country. They are old-fashioned enough to think that the masculine is more worthy than the feminine, and perhaps the fact that the charity element must necessarily exist in the Red Cross Society, and that, therefore, women's sphere is practically limited to that of 'ladies bountiful', is at the root of what I believe will soon cause the ruin of our organisation.³³

Fortuitously, Furse's attention was diverted: the Admiralty had made its choice. According to her autobiographical account, Furse was phoned by Chalmers Watson on 11 November, invited to lunch with her and her brother, Sir Eric Geddes, now First Sea Lord, and warned that she was to be asked to take over a naval organisation for women.³⁴ After this meeting Furse wrote that she liked Eric Geddes 'tremendously and felt that he was really powerful and would get good work out of me'.³⁵ Geddes arranged for her to visit the Second Sea Lord, who was in charge of all the necessary arrangements for establishing the women's naval service. Furse was asked to submit a

scheme for a corps on the lines of the WAAC, and it was agreed that the naval authorities would find out the number of women required, and the buildings necessary.³⁶ Again, Furse reported favourably of the men she met at the Admiralty: she found them 'extraordinarily nice...These men gave me an impression of being leaders and this was the inspiring factor'.³⁷

Furse resigned officially from the VAD on 14 November, and was replaced by Lady Ampthill. A number of women who had worked with her in GHQ VAD resigned at the same time, and were also appointed to the new women's naval service.³⁸ The following day Furse had a letter published in *The Times* in which she explained her reasons for resigning as Commandant-in-Chief of the VADs.³⁹ She had tried to fulfil the responsibility implied by her rank, but she had failed to receive the necessary support to ensure the proper well-being and control of VAD members. She believed that VAD women should be controlled by women VAD officers, with the advice and help of experienced matrons and other women with knowledge of women's work and conditions: -

Instead of this, the VAD organisation is controlled by a committee consisting mainly of men. Only lately have we succeeded in getting women representation on this committee, but only one of these ladies is a VAD officer. The VADs have proudly answered their country's call for heroism, sacrifice and devotion...Surely they should be allowed to look to their own officers to safeguard their welfare and maintain their esprit de corps? I am convinced that no honourable woman could continue to hold an office which implies so much responsibility, but in which she is granted no real authority to fulfil her obligations to the VADs, their relatives and friends.⁴⁰

Furse and two colleagues drew up the first regulations for the new naval service and, as she herself admitted, they were fortunate in having the model of the WAAC scheme, though she claimed that except

for rates of pay, which had to be equivalent, they were careful not to follow it in detail.⁴¹ There was little difficulty in settling on terms of service or pay and allowances, but the choice of name for the service gave them more trouble. Furse commented that they were made sensitive because of their knowledge of the nick-names given to other women's Corps: they rejected WANKS (Women's Auxiliary Naval Corps) and settled finally on WRNS - Women's Royal Naval Service.⁴²

On 26 November Sir Eric Geddes asked for the approval of King George V for a separate women's service to substitute women for men on certain shore work with the Royal Navy.⁴³ Three days later there was a formal notice in the press,⁴⁴ and on the same day an Admiralty Office Memorandum (No. 245) was circulated, announcing its establishment.⁴⁵ Members of the WRNS were to wear a distinctive uniform, and service would be confined to women employed on definite duties directly connected with the Royal Navy. It was not intended for the present to include those serving in departments of the Admiralty or the Royal Dockyards, and there were to be no applications or inquiries until a further announcement, to be made shortly, about the mode of recruitment for the WRNS had been made.

Initially, Furse suggested that WRNS should share WAAC recruiting machinery, and she told the Second Sea Lord that she understood that the Chief Controller of the WAAC would welcome that arrangement.⁴⁶ However, in January 1918 the Admiralty was informed by the War Office that it would be impossible at present to extend WAAC facilities to the WRNS.⁴⁷ Despite assurance from the Ministry of National Service that its own machinery for recruiting women for the WRNS was ready⁴⁸ the WRNS elected to start its own recruiting

arrangements in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour.⁴⁹ Some weeks later the War Office changed its mind, and informed the Admiralty that it was now prepared to share its recruitment facilities after all.⁵⁰

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The War Office change of heart may have been prompted by a desire to obstruct the progress of the Ministry of National Service recruitment scheme, which was still being opposed by other departments. The Minister of Labour, G.H. Roberts, complained to Geddes that the principles of his proposal⁵¹ were contrary to the agreement Geddes had signed when he had become Minister of National Service, and he also complained about the unsatisfactory manner in which National Service officers had treated his staff.⁵² Geddes told Roberts he would ask his people to 'hold their horses', while he considered Roberts' objection,⁵³ but unfortunately he failed to instruct his staff on the matter; a lapse in communication which caused some resentment.⁵⁴ Corsellis, Rey and Lady Mackworth continued to work on the recruitment scheme, undeterred by Miss Durham, who pointed out that the position was very different to what it had been back in October 1917, when the desirability of greater co-ordination was first mooted; now the WRNS and the WAAC were working on the same lines, and the proposed Women's Air Service Corps was likely to adopt similar terms of service.⁵⁵ Corsellis and Mackworth put forward a compromise: one Corps would be formed, and the Ministry of National Service would control 'Staff Work'⁵⁶ while 'Regimental Work'⁵⁷ would be administered by the state department concerned.

Further meetings failed to produce a resolution.⁵⁸ In an effort to rectify the 'growing feeling of dissatisfaction on the part of the

various State Departments at the want of activity by Ministry of National Service',⁵⁹ a conference was organised, at which Auckland Geddes explained that the main reason his department was fussing about the women's corps was that if the war continued for some time, as seemed likely, it might be necessary to bring in compulsion for women.⁶⁰ With the existing diversity among the various women's organisations, compulsion would be extremely difficult to introduce. Geddes claimed that the Cabinet had given him the responsibility to watch and co-ordinate the development of the women's corps, in order to ensure that nothing was done which would have to be undone if compulsion for women was introduced. He also anticipated the expansion of women's organisations, and insisted that for this reason, whether under voluntary or compulsory service, it was essential to have a 'common portal' through which all women passed.

The response to Geddes's attempts to persuade his audience was hardly reassuring. Sir Nevil Macready described his reaction to the Ministry of National Service pamphlet which set out its proposals as 'horror'; yet another government department proposed 'not to put a finger in the War Office pie but to put a couple of hands into it', and the Army Council was not prepared to agree.⁶¹ If Britain were in the position of having to make and train a new organisation and a new army then they might have accepted women's service for Army, Navy and Air Force being under one central control. But they had old established customs and old established organisations, and Macready objected to a great many of the Ministry of National Service proposals. As far as recruiting was concerned, he did not care whether it was done through labour exchanges or Ministry of National

Service, as long as they received the right number and type of women they required. He resented National Service interference on matters such as discipline and accommodation, and he reported that the authorities in France had objected strongly to the idea of having more than one women's organisation over there.⁶² He did not object to National Service taking over recruiting hostels; he did object to the proposal that they should be responsible for uniforms. As for discipline, the Army Council would not accept disciplinary action by any third authority; they had quite enough of that in the House of Commons, without interference from any other government department.

Sir David Shackleton questioned Geddes's assumption that women were reluctant to be recruited through labour exchanges, and he asked Geddes if the compulsion he described was intended to include women in industrial life? Geddes distinguished two grades of compulsion: compulsion for service with the forces, which he believed could be extended to women on lines broadly similar to those for men, and 'other conditions', apart from industrial compulsion in civil life.⁶³ The first stage of compulsion for women would be compulsion for service with the fighting forces, and possibly for agriculture. Shackleton insisted that there was a difference between men and women; you could compel a man to go as a soldier and put him to a trade, but you could not compel a woman to go as a soldier.

Both Lady Amptill of the VAD and Lady Londonderry of the Women's Legion⁶⁴ wanted recruiting arrangements to be as flexible as possible. Their organisations drew members more easily, they explained, from a class which did not go to labour exchanges; they did not wish to send all their members to the same hostels, or to be given

uniforms, and Lady Londonderry confessed that she did not like the idea of having common Selection Boards and Medical Boards. The War Office Financial Department representative expressed doubt that the War Office would approve a 'common portal', and reported that the Army Council refused to admit any jurisdiction whatsoever on the part of the Ministry of National Service to deal with pay or allowances.

The conference failed completely to persuade departments that it was in their best interest to allow the Ministry of National Service to pursue its plans. It was decided that a sub-committee should be formed to examine points of agreement, and that concerned departments would be asked to nominate a representative, but it was apparent that areas of agreement were few. The Ministry of National Service continued to try to co-ordinate such matters as common selection and medical boards, and common hostels,⁶⁵ but having failed to achieve its ambition for central recruiting it had relatively little impact on the future development of the women's corps.⁶⁶

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Woman Power Council

An attempt to form a Woman Power Council was made by a group including Violet Markham and May Tennant. This had a similar aim to the Ministry of National Service: to provide adequate machinery for the general mobilisation of womanpower and a proper organisation for recruiting women for the various State corps.⁶⁷ It was promoted by Sir Trustram Eve, a member of the Labour Advisory Council at the Ministry of National Service, who had independently evolved a similar plan for a women's council.⁶⁸ Sir Auckland Geddes was discouraging: when Eve and Tennant visited him, he told them that there was a

waiting list for the WAAC and that he could do nothing further about recruiting or improved organisation of women until there was a shortage. He also told them that the new recruiting plan on which the Ministry of National Service had worked for so long had practically broken down because of the opposition of other departments, and he insisted that he was unable to set up a Council to deal with matters which affected the discipline or organisation of the women's corps.⁶⁹

In July 1918 an endeavour was made to persuade the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet to appoint a Woman Power Council, to consist of representative women from different departments, as well as organised women's labour and general women's interests in the community at large.⁷⁰ It was explained that while it would initially be concerned primarily with the Women's Corps, a Woman Power Council would ultimately be in a position to voice the opinion of women on other questions in connection with the public services, about which their experience would prove of value to the State. It was desirable that women should be adequately represented on all commissions, committees and public bodies set up to deal with subjects which in any way touched their interests. A representative Woman Power Council would inspire confidence among women themselves, it was claimed, and would stimulate their sense of duty and public responsibility.

The political implications of a Woman Power Council - providing women with power outside parliament, in an arena of expanding influence - probably ensured it did not gain official support, but the need for such a body was manifest. If the establishment of the women's military corps was not merely to provide a new way for the government to control women, then women themselves must have a forum

for controlling their sisters in uniform. But, as with the move to introduce conscription for women, little more was heard of the Woman Power Council.⁷¹

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Conscription for Women

A new Military Service Bill was introduced in April, 1918, which stated that all men under the age of 51 would be liable to compulsory military service. The extension of the conscription age for men provoked a critical response from those who believed it was time that women were also made liable for compulsory service. In a letter to *The Times*, Eleanor Rathbone,⁷² a committed feminist and member of the NUWSS, called on the government to extend the Conscription Act to women, or, at least, to adopt a Derby scheme of attestation for them.⁷³ With the age of military service for men raised to 50 and lowered to 17, the work in which the new soldiers would be employed was likely to be mostly in auxiliary services and home defence. Rathbone suggested it would be better if young unmarried women between the ages of 20 and 30 were employed; they could be just as effective, and more easily spared from civilian occupations. Men between 40 and 50 would cost the country enormous sums in separation allowances and Treasury grants, for most were married and had financial responsibilities. Rightly or wrongly, the country had accepted the principle of conscription for women: the last argument for differentiating between them was obviated by the Representation of the People Act, which conceded the right of full citizenship to women.

Equal citizenship involved equal obligations, though not necessarily identical obligations. Rathbone believed there was an

overwhelming case to be made for putting this particular duty upon women, and she claimed that the government would have done so long ago if it had not been for the prejudice and imperviousness of the War Office to new ideas. In June 1915 she had put before a Birmingham Council meeting a scheme for using the services of women in the army on much the same lines as the present WAAC. Two years had been wasted before the War Office took any action on those lines, and then they had acted in such a half-hearted way that they seemed 'to be asking only for the leavings and sweepings of other occupations'.⁷⁴ If the WAAC was a moderate success when it had been started under such conditions, what might it not have become if it had been made 'an integral and vital part of a national army, empowered to enlist the pick of young womanhood, as it had enlisted the pick of young manhood'?⁷⁵ If 'equality of opportunity' was to be one of the watchwords of the NUWSS in future, then they should 'press the formula to its logical conclusion and demand an equality of opportunity for national service and patriotic sacrifice'.⁷⁶

Support for conscription of women was not confined to those who regarded it as an important sign of equality with men: for example, the wives of the Lords Lieutenants of the Counties formed a movement to work for conscription of women in order to prevent severely wounded men from having to return to the front.⁷⁷

Early in May the Prime Minister was asked in the Commons whether, in view of the fact that rumours of possible conscription of women was having an unsettled effect on business houses which were now mainly dependent on female labour, the government proposed to introduce or support any measure dealing with this question.⁷⁸ The

House was told that the government had no present intention of introducing legislation on the subject.⁷⁹ The government's caution on the matter was justified: public support was not assured, and conscription of women into the military services might well be regarded unfavourably as another unwarranted extension of government control.⁸⁰

The subject was broached again two months later. When giving notice to Auckland Geddes that he intended to raise the question of compulsion for women in the Commons, J.A. Marriott sent the Minister for National Service a letter 'from a most influential representative body of women in Oxford'.⁸¹ It described a meeting held in Oxford at the end of June to consider the best means of raising the 15,000 women apparently required by the War Office for the QMWAAC⁸² and the 30,000 women needed for the Land Army. Many of those present had favoured immediate conscription of women from 20 to 40 years of age, for, as in the case of men, conscription for women would mean 'equal service for all and fairness to all'; this was necessary, it was claimed, because large numbers of women were still idle.

Auckland Geddes was not persuaded, however, and in reply to Marriott's question in the Commons as to whether the Minister of National Service was aware of the desire of a number of women that the principle of compulsory national service for women should be adopted forthwith, and whether he proposed to take any action on the matter, replied that though there was a shortage of women in certain categories there was not, at the moment, 'sufficient indication of any shortage of woman-power as a whole which would justify a measure of compulsory national service for women'.⁸³ It was not until the Second

World War that the government eventually conceded that compulsion for women was desirable.⁸⁴

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Administrative problems continued to dog all attempts to instigate a satisfactory recruitment policy for the women's corps until the end of the war, and during the last six months of the war there was a repetition of the previous year's in-fighting between the National Service Department and the Ministry of Labour. Though the War Cabinet had ruled that the Ministry of National Service should be responsible for controlling the recruiting of all women for work of national importance, and it had been agreed at a Conference on Women's Corps at the end of April 1918 that common selection and medical boards were desirable, there had been little real progress.⁸⁵

Katharine Furse complained to Violet Markham that the War Office and Ministry of Labour between them had 'killed' the Women's Section National Service, and she described what she believed was the situation within the Ministry of National Service:

Rey against Corsellis and Lady Mackworth...Miss Durham undermining. Then a great faux-pas when Air got an advance copy of NS scheme and so WO and M of L refused to play - Intrigue, jealousy and blocking. The Worst of all *within* the M of NS, I believe, but taken advantage of outside. Miss Durham with her fine intellect and great energy and keenness manipulating many people less clever than herself. M of NS blunderingly omitting her or relegating her and her department to a back seat doing all their dirty work while they appeared in the public eye, had their Scheme come off. The scheme was as tactlessly conceived as it is possible to think of. It might have been intended to upset Departments like HO and M of L.⁸⁶

Furse was also critical of the Women's Legion's contention that because they drew on a different and superior class of women to WAAC

and WRNS, they must remain independent. According to Furse the WRNS did not 'want the WL type' and its numbers were negligible, but Lady Londonderry herself was 'not negligible as a personality and she is the cause of endless mischief behind the scenes'.⁹⁷

Furse described the tediousness of the joint meetings: the lack of agreement on every subject and the War Office blocking everything. 'And so we go round and round the mulberry bush and still M of NS which already has War Cabinet approval of its taking over recruiting slumbers and dreams of "Mutual Consent"'.⁹⁸ She suggested despairingly that the War Cabinet surely could compel the three fighting departments to accept one recruiting agency and one set of terms and conditions for all the organisations they controlled? It was true that the total number of women involved was small, yet they had to be considered from a totally different viewpoint to industrial employment. The only solution to the difficulty was to lump all three women's services together under one administration, and to lend out units of women to work with the Navy, Army or Air Force. No-one, Furse complained, could understand why National Service did not at least make a start with WRNS and WRAF. At one time their excuse for inaction had been the peril of the channel ports, at another, the manpower difficulties; now it was claimed that they needed 'mutual consent'. Furse suspected that the real state of affairs was that the Minister was 'bored and too busy to look into the matter as well as being perhaps ill advised'; Colonel Corsellis was a 'coward' and Lady Mackworth lacked understanding.

In July 1918, Lt. General Lawson, author of the report which had originally suggested substitution of women in the Army undertook an

examination of personnel employed with the Army in Great Britain.⁸⁹

In October he produced a report in which he claimed that there was still room for substitution of many thousands of men by women with the Army at home, and that such substitution should have precedence over female substitution abroad, where all difficulties were greater.⁹⁰

According to Lawson it was 'difficult to place a limit to the employment of women in the army'.⁹¹ He had discussed 'the woman question' with senior officers, a considerable number of whom were much in favour of more women being employed, and they believed that if they were given a freer hand, they could materially add to the numbers they employed. Lawson suggested General Officers Commanding should be encouraged to take on women by whatever means they wished. There were many women, he believed, who were prepared to work for the army but did not want to join the QMAAC, either because they disapproved of it as a 'quasi-military organisation', or because they did not want to bind themselves for the duration of the war.

Lawson considered that the greatest objection to the QMAAC was that it had not yet 'delivered the goods' and that numbers supplied fell far short of requirements.⁹² He criticised the corps for being over-organised and centralised, having unduly large staffs and too many administrators, and for adhering too strictly to the rigid rules which governed the employment of women. He suggested that civil subordinates should be engaged as well as members of the corps, and that the two systems should work side by side, so that a woman who did not care to wear a uniform, or bind herself too closely, would join as a civil subordinate, whilst women who preferred uniform and a semi-military organisation would join the QMAAC.

Part of the reason for the recruitment difficulties lay in the fluctuations of supply. In 1918 there had been first a shortage and then a surplus of suitable women for the corps, and by June 1918 there was a definite shortage of certain classes of women, chiefly clerical and domestic.⁹³ In August *The Times* had reported that women were so urgently needed for the QMAAC that 'almost any woman of good character, industry and suitable physique can find a place in the corps'.⁹⁴ Thousands of women were wanted, yet only hundreds were coming forward. The paper described as 'piteous' the appeals from different Commands. One Commanding Officer, promised a large contingent, had fenced off the pleasantest part of his camp, laid out a garden and provided dining and recreation rooms. He was quoted as saying 'These are my "Quaackeries", but where are my WAACs?' The cynical reply, according to *The Times*, was that you could 'see them any afternoon from 3 to 6 on the river'. The newspaper claimed that there were still thousands of idle women and girls all over the country.

Shortage of female clerks prompted a plan to select adequately educated women by asking for a handwritten letter from women already enrolled in the QMAAC.⁹⁵ Meetings were held by QMAAC officers throughout the country; recruiting huts were opened, while prominent local citizens - wives of squires and parsons - were provided with information to enable them to help women and girls who, it was believed, would prefer to go to them rather than face the bluntness of the official manner. Plans were made for an elaborate recruiting campaign for the three women's military corps to take place between the end of October and the end of the year.⁹⁶ Negotiations for the

campaign were marked by squabbles; Ministry of Labour felt it could not take part in the campaign unless they took the lead in publicity and organisation, while the WRNS expressed a dislike for Ministry of Labour publicity, and the Deputy Director WRNS insisted the WRNS would be better to arrange its own recruiting. But the plans came to nothing: the Armistice intervened, and on 4 November it was agreed that the campaign should be postponed.⁹⁷

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FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 8 [Pages 218 to 240]

1. Charles Walker, Admiralty, to Secretary, MNS, 18 October 1917, PRO NATS 1/79.
2. Colonel Corsellis' 'Scheme', 27 August 1917, IWM Army 32/27. These included Queen Alexander's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS); Territorial Force Nursing Service; VAD; women in WO Pay Departments; Forage Committee; Navy and Army Canteen Boards. The WAAC and VAD General Service in particular competed over recruiting and accommodation, and Corsellis thought these two organisations should amalgamate.
3. Sandford Fawcett, MNS to Secretary, WO, 23 October 1917, PRO NATS 1/79.
4. Phillips, Employment Dept., ML to C. Rey, MNS, *ibid.*
5. War Office (AGXI) to DG of NS, *ibid.* The Army Council also suggested that all recruiting for the Corps should be undertaken by the MNS.
6. A.C. Geddes, Secret Memo., NSR 20, 'Recruitment and Organisation of Women Enrolled for Work of National Importance', 12 November 1917, PRO NATS 1/78.
7. The War Office obtained women by different methods for the WAAC, Joint VAD Committee, Navy and Army Canteens Boards, Almeric Paget Massage Corps, Timber Supply Department, Forage Committee and Remount Department. *Ibid.*
8. *Precis* of Conference No. 45, 16 November 1917, *ibid.* The conference was attended by representatives from the Admiralty, WO, M of M, ML, Ministry of Food, Board of Agriculture, HO, Food Production Department, BT, MNS, VAD, WAAC, WRNS and WL.
9. War Cabinet 287, 29 November 1917, PRO CAB 23/4.
10. E. Sandford Fawcett, MNS to Secretary HM Treasury, 14 December 1917, PRO T1/12129/3534/18.
11. *Ibid.*
12. T.L. Heath, Treasury, to Secretary, MNS, *ibid.*
13. Geddes announced that Lady Mackworth had accepted the post in the House of Commons, on 14 January 1918. 101 H.C. Deb 5s, Col. 77. Violet Markham wrote to congratulate Lady Mackworth on her new appointment; she warned her to 'have your relations with Miss Durham very carefully defined before you begin work'. Markham to Lady Mackworth, 15 January, 1918,, LSE Markham 4/9.
14. A. Corsellis to C. Rey, DGNLS, Minute 1, 'Recruiting Scheme for Women's Corps, 16 January 1918, PRO NATS 1/76; Rey to MNS, 18

- January 1918, *ibid*; 25 January 1918, IWM WRNS 7/7; Conference AGXI, 26 January 1918, PRO WO162/34.
15. J. Reid Hyde, MNS to Secretary, Treasury, 22 January 1918, PRO T1/12129/3534/18. T.L. Heath to Sec. MNS, *ibid*.
 16. Handwritten note (F.A.) 29 January 1918, PRO T1/12129/3534/18.
 17. In reply to a letter from Nevil Macready, Geddes told the Adjutant General that he knew nothing about any proposal to organise the whole of women's work under one organisation, let alone under his ministry; he insisted that all he wanted to do was to co-ordinate the recruitment of women. A. Geddes to Lt. Gen. Sir C.F.M. Macready, 1 February 1918, PRO NATS 1/77.
 18. C. Rey, Minute 1, 3 December, 1917; Minute 2, 5 December 1917, Minute 3, 7 December 1918, PRO NATS 1/76.
 19. The Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF).
 20. Lilian Clapham had worked in the old WS NSD.
 21. Sir Arthur Stanley to Dame K. Furse, 4 October 1917, IWM BRC 10^a/7 and 8.
 22. *Ibid*.
 23. Lord Derby to Lloyd George, 12 October 1917, LRC/920 DER (17) 17/1 WO 1916 - 1918.
 24. *Ibid*.
 25. *Ibid*.
 26. Furse to Markham, 26 October 1917, LSE Markham 4/11.
 27. Furse to Chairman and members of Central Joint VAD Committee, 30 October 1917 (enclosed in letter from Furse to Stanley, 30 October, 1917), LSE Markham 4/12.
 28. Letters to K. Furse, 4 April 1916 and 12 May 1916, LSE Markham 4/12.
 29. K. Furse to Sir Arthur Stanley, 30 October, 1917, *op. cit*.
 30. Stanley to K. Furse, 1 November 1917, *ibid*. Also Minutes of 41st Meeting of Central Joint VAD Committee, 1 November 1917, IWM BRC 10^a/34.
 31. Furse to Sir Arthur Stanley, 2 November 1917, LSE Markham 4/12.
 32. For biographical notes, see Appendix VII.
 33. Furse to Royden, 6 November 1917, IWM BRC 10^a/73.

34. K. Furse, *Hearts and Pomegranates*, op cit. p. 360.
35. Ibid.
36. General Organisation, 12 November 1917, IWM WRNS 7/6.
Extract from Maintenance Committee Minutes, 'Employment of Women', 12 November 1917, PRO ADM1/8507/278.
37. Furse, *Hearts and Pomegranates*, op. cit., p. 361.
38. Edith Crowdy became Deputy Director of WRSN; Mary Cane and Winifred Dakyns were appointed Assistant Directors.
39. K. Furse, Letter to Editor, 'VAD Organisation', *The Times*, 15 November 1917.
40. Ibid.
41. K. Furse, *Hearts and Pomegranates*, op. cit., p. 361.
42. Ibid., p. 366.
43. Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the Admiralty, to King George V, 26 November 1917, PRO ADM 1/8507/278.
44. *The Times*, 'Women for the Navy', 29 November 1917, p. 6.
45. K. Furse, *Hearts and Pomegranates*, op. cit., p. 366.
Recruitment for the WRNS did not begin immediately; it was not until 4 February, 1918, that Admiralty Weekly Orders (AWO) announced that 'The provision of suitable women for WRNS will be carried out by Director WRNS at Admiralty, in conjunction with Employment Department of Ministry of Labour, or with the National Service Department'. 4 February 1918, Fleet Order 414, PRO ADM 1/8507/278.
46. (II) Use of Existing Machinery, 26 November 1917, IWM WRNS 7/29.
47. War Office Minute, 15 January 1918, *ibid*.
48. Undated letter from MNS to Secretary, ADM (written between 27 January and 1 February 1918), PRO NATS 1/79.
49. K. Furse to C. Rey, 7 February 1918, *ibid*. W. Nicholson, ADM to Secretary, MNS, 8 February 1918, *ibid*.
50. (II) Use of Existing Recruiting Machinery, 26 February 1918, IWM WRNS 7/29.
51. That the recruiting of women for the various corps would be directly in the charge of Geddes's department.
52. G. Roberts, Minister of Labour to Sir Auckland Geddes, 30 January 1918, PRO NATS 1/76.
53. Auckland Geddes to G.H. Roberts, 5 February 1918, *ibid*.

54. C. Rey to Geddes, Minute 6, 19 February 1918, *ibid.* Rey reminded Geddes that at a meeting on 7 February Geddes had instructed them to proceed, and consequently Corsellis had drawn up another revised scheme.
55. F.H. Durham to C. Rey, 27 February 1918, *ibid.*
56. Staff work included inspection of accommodation and personnel; medical and police services; welfare of women; disciplinary procedures, and, crucially, the selection and training of officers.
5. Regimental work would consist of such matters as pay, rations, uniform 'and the hundred and one administrative details of daily life'. A. Corsellis to DGNLS, Minute 1, 'Women's Corps. Proposal for amalgamation into a National Corps of Women Workers', 28 February 1918. PRO NATS 1/76.
58. For example, (8b) 4 March 1918; (9A) 5 March 1918; PRO NATS 1/76. Also C. Rey, Min. 2, 8 March 1918; W.F. Nicholson, ADM to Sec. MNS (13A), 17 March 1918; Corsellis to Lady Mackworth, Min. 13, 21 March 1918; A.C. Geddes to G. Roberts, 29 March 1918; G.H. Roberts, ML to Sir Auckland Geddes, 8 April 1918, *ibid.*
59. A. Corsellis, Minute 1, 'Women's Corps Recruiting Scheme', 10 April 1917, *ibid.*
60. 'Conference on Proposed Co-Ordination of Recruitment for State Departments'. Conference No. 148, 23 April 1918, PRO WO162/34. The conference was attended by numerous people, including Sir Nevil Macready and other representatives from the WO and WAAC; the VAD, WL, WRNS, Air Ministry and WRAF; Sir David Shackleton and Miss Durham from ML, and staff from MNS, including Cecil Beck, MP., Lt Col. Corsellis and Lady Mackworth.
61. Conference 23 April 1918, *ibid.* The pamphlet to which he referred, which had been circulated by MNS, was *Pamphlet MNS W*', March 1918, PRO NATS 1/76.
62. 18 March 1918, Jan - Dec. 1918, A.G. GHQ 1st Echelon, in AG Diaries, PRO WO95/26. At the Conference on 23 April Macready explained that he really meant two women's organisations, for he included the VAD.
63. Conference 23 April 1918, *op. cit.*
64. A few days earlier the Women's Legion changed its name to 'War Services Legion'. This new name was given to the group activities of the Women's Legion as men were being employed in two sections. *The Times*, 19 April 1918.
65. At a meeting in April it was decided that the need for common hostels had not been proved. Conference No. 149, 29 April 1918, PRO WO162/34. J.M. Balfour, MNS to WO, ADM, Air Ministry, ML, BRC, WL, 'Proposals for common selection and medical boards', 25 May 1918, PRO NATS 1/76.

66. Though Lady Mackworth [who became known as Lady Rhondda after the death of her father] was later charged with having persuaded the Secretary of State for Air to sack the head of the Women's Air Force. See Chapter 10.
67. P. Lloyd-Greame to Lady Mackworth, 16 April 1918, 'Woman Power in the UK Policy File', PRO NATS 1/76.
68. V. Markham to K. Furse, 22 May 1918, LSE Markham 4/13.
69. Ibid. Markham was told by Lady Mackworth that recruiting arrangements had not broken down, and that while there was a waiting list for the WAAC in some areas, there was a great shortage in others.
70. 'Memorandum on Women Power' (undated, unsigned, but almost certainly submitted by Violet Markham). Sent with letter 10 July 1918, by Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's secretary, to Philip Cambray, Secretary to Auckland Geddes; 'Woman Power in UK Policy File', PRO NATS 1/76.
71. Philip Cambray told Frances Stevenson that Geddes had seen the memorandum and wished to speak to the PM on the question of women power, as he had received a number of representations. Philip G. Cambray to Miss F.L. Stevenson, 12 July 1918, *ibid.* I could find no record of any further action on the subject.
72. See Appendix VII for biographical notes on Eleanor Rathbone.
73. *The Times*, 6 April 1918. Eleanor Rathbone repeated this plea in *Common Cause*, 12 April 1918.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.* Violet Markham contacted Eleanor Rathbone and promised to send her a memorandum on the proposed Woman Council, expressing the view that Rathbone might think some of the proposals 'somewhat inadequate'. Markham explained that they had all agreed that any larger demands would wreck the chance of getting the Council started. She told Rathbone that those involved included Lady Mackworth, Mrs Chalmers Watson, Mrs Courtney, Mrs Deane Streatfield, and Miss Strachey. V. Markham to Miss Eleanor Rathbone, 4 May 1918, LSE Markham 4/9.
77. Lady Askwith, 'The Conscription of Women', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 May 1918. Lady Askwith became Secretary of this movement. See also p. 235 and footnote 81 below. I was unable to trace what became of this group.
78. Colonel L. Wilson, 2 May 1918, 105 HC Deb 5s, Col. 1723.
79. Bonar Law provided a written reply. *Ibid.*

80. In May 1918 the Ministry of Labour sent the WRNS a copy of a statement made at a meeting of the Maidstone Local Advisory Committee held in April, that girls employed in Royal Naval Air Service establishments in two places were being coerced into joining the WRNS for no reason other than to place them under greater restraint. It was interpreted as showing an intention to introduce industrial conscription, and there was a very serious prospect of a strike if such action persisted. Ministry of Labour to DD WRNS (VIII Trade Union Criticisms), 17 May 1918, IWM WRNS 7/39.
81. J.A. Marriott to Auckland Geddes, 10 July 1918, 'Woman Power in UK Policy File (2A)', op. cit.
82. 11 July 1918, 108 HC Dev 5s, Col. 490.
83. Ibid.
84. See Chapter 11.
85. A. Corsellis to B. Capt. Joseph, Minute 51, 25 June 1918, PRO NATS 1/76. The Ministry of Labour refused to agree that publicity should be in the hands of the Ministry of National Service, or that other, supplementary, recruiting agencies should be utilised.
86. K. Furse to V. Markham, 30 June 1918, LSE Markham 4/12.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. R.H. Brade, WO to GOC in C, G.B., 8 July 1918, PRO WO32/11284.
90. *Confidential First Report by Lt. Gen. Sir H.M. Lawson, K.C.B., of An Examination into the Personnel employed with the Army in G.B., with special reference to a detailed revision of particular establishments throughout the Kingdom, 24 October 1918.*
91. Ibid., 9 (2), p. 14.
92. Ibid. 9 (4), p. 15, *Substitution of Men by Women in the Employments and in the Administrative Services.*
93. A. Corsellis to B. Capt. Joseph, Minute 51, 25 June 1918, PRO NATS 1/76.
94. *The Times*, 17 August 1918, 'Need for women War Workers'.
95. Chief Controller to Controller, 27 July 1918, IWM Army 3¹⁵/21.
96. Service Conference, 1 October 1918, IWM WRNS 7/29.
97. Minutes of Recruiting Sub Committee, 4 November 1918, IWM WRNS 7/29.

CHAPTER 9

RUMOURS

THE WAAC

*Have you heard of the latest advance
I don't mean of Tommies or Jacks
But this awful invasion of France
By those wonderful women the WAACs.*

*At first we got only a few
But of late they've been coming in packs
And for weeks, upon weeks, upon weeks,
We've had WAACs upon WAACs upon WAACs.*

*We have Pagans, Agnostics and Jews,
Yellow Chinks and Brown Gypies and Blacks
Portuguese and Fijis and Hindoos
And now we are worried with WAACs.*

*I hear that the Kaiser grows grey
And his poor crazy cranium cracks
That, in short, he is fading away
Through the tales he is told of the WAACs*

*When this wild wicked war is well won
Turnque nobiseum erit pax
The foot on the neck of the Hun
Will be shod by the shoes of the WAACs.**

By the end of 1917 the WAAC had become a target for gossipmongers. Two of the contributing factors to the spread of rumours were the growing public awareness of the extent and danger of venereal disease, and the publicity given to the use of state-regulated brothels by British troops in France.¹ The close proximity of the WAAC in France to the men fighting gave a measure of credibility to the stories, and in the last months of 1917 the Corps was increasingly troubled by rumours about the behaviour of its

**An abbreviation of a verse included in the papers of Mrs E.E. Quinlan, WAAC, IWM Documents, Ref. P.348 (2).*

recruits. Details varied, but there were two main accusations: that large numbers of WAAC were being sent home pregnant; or alternatively, that many were suffering from venereal disease. According to one report the numbers involved were anything from 50 to 500.² This source listed what it claimed were the main allegations made against the women. These included an assertion that the War Office had undertaken to pay a bonus for every baby born to members of the WAAC (the amount of bonus quoted varied from £5 to £50); that the War Office was intending to introduce compulsory conscription of all women between 18 and 25 in order to supply camp followers for the soldiers; that there were prostitutes among the members of the WAAC, and addresses of houses where soldiers or officers could meet these women were circulated privately among certain base camps, in some of which officers frequently donned soldiers' overcoats in order to be able to go out unobserved.³

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Popular assumptions about the sexual behaviour of men and women in war conditions probably contributed to the willingness of many people to believe the worst, and the attitude of the military authorities did nothing to quell anxieties.⁴ According to one writer the 'strain and stress of life on the edge of death' accelerated the breaking down of the old taboos in sexual matters, and 'The millions of young men' involved in the war faced 'with imminent extinction...seized what chances came of satisfying their sexual impulses'.⁵ The young women who gained two-fold independence - financial (through employment, in women's corps, as nurses, office workers, factory workers) and personal (through severance of family

ties) from all classes - were available to partner the men. Sex became both precious and unimportant to men and women; precious, as a desired personal experience, and unimportant - for there were no serious implications, except for the young women who got pregnant. 'Men who had spent months in the filth and blood of Flanders...where sex sank into unimportance in the face of the more urgent need of self-preservation, came on leave for a few days - found themselves, by renewed contact with women, made once more acutely aware of desire'.⁶

It is a popular theme: John Costello writes that 'Sex and War have always been inextricably linked';⁷ '"War aphrodisia"...had been traditionally ascribed to men in battle'.⁸ In *The Great War and Modern Memory* Paul Fussell comments that 'Since antiquity everyone who has experienced both war and love has known there is a curious intercourse between them. The language of military attack - *assault, impact, thrust, penetration* - has always overlapped with that of sexual importunity'.⁹ Fussell explores the literature relating to this theme, and quotes from a novel about the Guadalcanal campaign, where the hero questions whether 'all war [is] basically sexual?...A sort of sexual perversion?'.¹⁰ Fussell concludes that we should 'not be surprised to find both the actuality and the recall of front line experience replete with ...the homoerotic', a term which he explains implies 'a sublimated (i.e. "chaste") form of temporary homosexuality'.¹¹

The authors of a book entitled *Sexual Life during the World War*, which appeared in 1937, were unremitting in their view that among the 'subconscious motives' which provoke war is the 'sexual factor'; that

war, no matter with what ostensible object it is waged, is to some extent similar to the contest normally fought during the mating season by the males of certain species of animals for the

possessions of the female. This applies to all wars, past and present, and there is ample evidence to support this theory...the Lust for killing goes parallel with sexual lust.¹²

The reason, they suggest, lies in the fact that

In ordinary times the sexual life of the individual degenerates into a weekly or fortnightly routine, lacking both in passionate excitement and novelty, so that the sexual instinct is always to some extent in a state of repression, and the subconscious desire to escape from the rut, to burst the bounds of convention, is present in all of us.

Improbable as this theory may appear to the average man, it is impossible to dismiss as mere speculation, for it provides the only acceptable explanation of war. Sexual lust and blood lust are compelling primeval instincts - the animal in man - and it is hardly possible to conceive that whole nations would throw themselves into an orgy of murder and indescribable horror without some such psychological urge. Economic interest, greed, even so-called idealism, are inadequate in themselves, as an explanation of such a cataclysm as the Great War.¹³

Women are not exempt: 'there can be no doubt whatever that the general enthusiasm and patriotic fervour that accompany the outbreak of hostilities and are later fostered by ceaseless propaganda, exercise a sexually stimulating effect on most women, but particularly on impressionable young girls and women of sensitive temperament'.¹⁴ The authors of this provocative declaration conceded that England, because it escaped invasion, 'escaped some of the more appalling phenomena of fear-induced sexual promiscuity on the part of her female population', but still, they describe the conduct of women during the war (and particularly during the last few months of 1914) as 'remarkable...England...was full of bright-eyed women, slightly hysterical, perhaps, but certainly neither timid nor anxious. They suddenly developed an unusual avidity and capacity for enjoyment'.¹⁵

In a more benign fashion, Helen Gwynne Vaughan, Commandant of the WAAC in France until September 1918, observed that 'in war, the man is more ardent, the woman more vulnerable' and warned that 'in war

one must reckon that the instincts of a woman in love will be reinforced by the fact that the man is going into danger...and by an unformulated desire to bear his child'.¹⁶ WAAC administrators were alerted to watch out for victims of war fever; it was not 'the pretty and attractive girl' who needed attention - she was used to admirers - but 'the older, plainer woman might find it intoxicating to be the cause of competition, and gratitude for this fillip to her self-respect might be her undoing'.¹⁷

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In a comparison of American and British responses to venereal disease in World War I Edward Beardsley states that neither French nor British Armies tried to curb the sexual activity of their men: 'To do so would have defied the conventional wisdom, which held that an army's morale was dependent on frequent sexual contact and its health, on the medically certified brothel'.¹⁸ According to Beardsley, British Army leaders at the beginning of World War I viewed 'prostitution as something between a necessary evil and a vital auxiliary service' and venereal disease as not to be avoided, given the demands of human nature, however regrettable. He contends that while the army officially frowned on segregated districts, unofficially they formed part of the organisation of every overseas unit.¹⁹ The evidence of the Imperial War Conference in 1917 indicates that it is unlikely that this was still happening during World War I, but unofficially at least some British Military authorities did approve of the principle of state-regulated brothels, because they considered they were the most effective method available of controlling the disease.²⁰

The consequences of prostitution on the health of troops was the subject of debate at the Imperial War Conferences in April 1917, at which a resolution was passed to protect the men.²¹ Pressure from the Colonial Office to ensure action was taken to give effect to that resolution led finally to the introduction in March 1918 of *Defence of the Realm Regulation 40(d)*, to protect HM Forces from the dangers of venereal disease:

No woman who is suffering from venereal disease in any communicable form shall have sexual intercourse with any member of HM forces or solicit or invite any member of HM forces to have sexual intercourse with her.

If any woman acts in contravention of this regulation she shall be guilty of a summary offence against these regulations.

A woman charged with an offence under this regulation shall if she so requires be remanded for a period (not less than a week) for the purpose of such medical examination as may be requisite for ascertaining whether she is suffering from such a disease as afore-said...²²

In response to the new regulation, all WAAC administrators were circulated with a memorandum which pointed out that DORA 40(d) made it a penal offence to communicate Venereal Disease to a soldier, and that charges of this sort had been made in several cases against women of the WAAC. In one Command seven such accusations had been made - all found to be untrue, and three had been purely malicious.²³ In the circumstances, Unit administrators were asked to give personal and confidential information to women of this risk, and impress upon them the danger of going into lonely places, or in any way compromising themselves with unknown men, who might afterwards make entirely unfounded charges against them. The women were also told to report immediately to the Area Controller any case in which such a charge was made against any woman.

At the same time that pressure was being put on the government to introduce legislation to control the spread of VD by prostitution in Britain,²⁴ the existence of '*maison tolérées*' in France was provoking growing criticism. Questions were asked in the House of Commons about a public brothel at Cayeux-sur-Mer, which had been opened on the main promenade in August, 1917.²⁵ It was purported that when the local townspeople sought to obtain the closure of the establishment, the mayor disclaimed all responsibility and alleged that the presence of a large British convalescent camp was the justification for the existence of such a house. The French military authorities had told those who complained that it was at the request of the English military authorities that this brothel was opened. An attempt to discover precisely who was responsible brought a reply from Sir Douglas Haig that the French authorities alone had jurisdiction in such purely domestic matters as the abolition or sanctioning of brothels, and Haig considered it was undesirable that the British should make any representations.²⁶

The related problems of VD and *maisons tolérées* were the subject of considerable publicity, and the War Office received dozens of letters, including one from a Baptist minister who complained about a street in Le Havre called Rue des Galions, where there were several houses kept specifically for prostitution, where not only were the women in the houses under supervision of British Medical men, but the fact that the street was *not* out of bounds was indicated to men in a most obtrusive manner.²⁷ This latter claim was repudiated by Haig,²⁸ but the existence of the houses on the Rue des Galions is confirmed in a memoir by Charles Carrington, who was a combatant soldier in a line

regiment in the First World War.²⁹ Carrington writes that part of the attraction of soldiering

was the unspoken assumption that on active service soldiers were released from the taboos of civil life. We no longer lived in an age when soldiers fought for plunder. They still fought for glory and, whatever else that might imply, it surely meant the favour of women. The stake was your own life; the cause was one for which you thought your life worth staking: the prize certainly was not wealth, but there must be a prize...³⁰

Carrington describes how in France, as the men well knew, there was a different system of taboos about sex than that which operated among his particular social stratum back home (the professional middle class; families of lawyers, doctors, clergy, schoolmasters, army officers and the like). And 'it was no surprise to find the town of Le Havre wide open; it had a red-light district with well-advertised brothels on two scales of payment, first-class for officers and second-class for other ranks'. He admits never to have discovered the official attitude of GHQ towards licensed prostitution, but he formed the impression that it was accepted as inevitable in the first years of the war, but was driven underground in later days, and it seemed to him that 'the luxury and glamour of the Rue des Galions' as he saw it in the winter of 1915 had become 'drab and clandestine' when he found himself again at the base three years later.³¹

Further questions in the Commons about the alleged brothel at Cayeux-sur-Mer prompted Macpherson, the Under-Secretary of State for War, to declare that he was 'not at all sure that it is such a bad thing to have a certain house where women are registered and kept clean'.³² The agitation which followed his remarks eventually forced the War Cabinet to place *maison tolérées* out of bounds,³³ to the disapproval of both General Haig and the Adjutant General at GHQ in

France.³⁴ Haig commented sourly that he had not been informed officially of the motives which prompted the War Cabinet decision, but supposed it was 'induced by the pressure of certain sections of public opinion, whose main interest in the Army consists in the reduction of fornication on the part of its members'.³⁵ Over the next months Haig tried unsuccessfully to persuade the War Cabinet to reconsider its decision.³⁶ The French also attempted to persuade the British military authorities to change their minds.³⁷ They believed, like Haig, that the measure would mean an increase in clandestine prostitution, and consequently in alcoholism and venereal disease, and they resented the fact that their efforts to control the brothels were thus being jeopardised. Nor, according to the Superintendent of one small town, was it only prostitutes with whom the British soldiers spent their time: 'The troops from the U.K. do not hide their out-pouring love with the ladies of the WAAC, and some couples have been caught by my agents in the "Acacias" meadows while they made love'.³⁸

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There was, of course, no real connection between an increase in VD, French brothels and the presence of the WAAC in France, but their co-existence inspired some of the nastier rumours. Other stories grew out of anxiety about women's camps. The Minister of Labour received a complaint that the conditions of many of these camps were 'so unnecessarily unfavourable as to constitute a grave menace to the future of the race', and that while in many cases the Military Authorities were straining to improve things, in some, nothing at all was being done.³⁹ Mrs Kate Gilmour claimed that as one of the few British girls who had 'lived through the first mad months of War in

France, in cities where the old regime has been overthrown and War standards reign', she had 'learned the dangers and temptations of camp life where women are at a premium, and the psychology of men living face to face with red death...'.⁴⁰ She described the situation brought to her notice at an unnamed camp [referred to as A in MI in August, where there were 34 WAAC cooks and waitresses, 10 female masseuses of the APMMC,⁴¹ 6 Red Cross clerks and a few others including including 3 tailors and an Army Service Corps driver. This camp was

From the women's point of view entirely undisciplined, unorganised and with a distinctly bad moral tone. The late superintendent who was really a head cook had no idea of organisation. From the majority of girls there is nothing but grouching and complaints. The masseuses and Red Cross clerks are catered for separately and say they have never had so good a time. The ASC driver complains that she did not enlist to drive third rate actresses and officers about, for which purpose the ambulance is mostly used. The head cook and others complain of overcrowding in sleeping accommodation, leaky roofs, and no place to go ill; which complaints are undoubtedly justified. Efforts to get roofs repaired fail, although there seems no dearth of labour for the erection of the new garrison theatre...Concerts to which the women go are given almost every night. The Superintendent reports that after the concerts they wander about the camp and many do not come in all night...The Colonel, chiefly interested in his band, theatricals and the new theatre is delighted with everything...⁴²

Mrs Gilmour suggested that there was 'an undoubted need for some competent body with real authority to deal with all matters concerning girls' welfare, directly, and not in reference to any Military Authorities'. In most cases the 'CO's every effort' was 'strained to raise the moral and physical tone of the girls' but in certain instances the reverse was the case, and the men in authority, far from recognising the seriousness of the situation, encouraged a low standard and set the pace.

In the last months of 1917 an increasing number of unpleasant stories were being circulated. A clerk at the Nottingham Employment Exchange reported that three women who had volunteered for the WAAC had withdrawn their applications because they had heard 'that the Corps was an organised body of camp followers'.⁴³ A letter from Scotland asserted that, of the domestic staff in a particular private dwelling 'None of them will join up, not even the second Tablemaid'.⁴⁴ This same correspondent quoted an extract from a letter by a young man to his girl: 'Give up the idea at once of joining the women's Army. You would regret it at once. It is absolutely no place for a woman. No women are required among men except nurses, so please forget all about it'.

The Scottish Division of the Employment Exchanges reported that throughout Scotland 'rumours of the wildest and most harmful nature concerning the WAAC are rampant'.⁴⁵ These rumours - almost entirely confined to what it was believed was happening in France, were 'undoubtedly grossly exaggerated...but it is difficult to believe that all are the simple invention of malicious or indiscreet persons'. But it was of secondary importance whether or not the rumours had any solid foundation; what mattered was that they were *accepted* as being based on fact, not only by prospective applicants, but by influential people who had been recruiting for the Corps, some of whom had now withdrawn their support, and felt it their duty to advise intending applicants not to enrol.

The author of the Scottish report had discussed the question with a 'prominent Trade Union Official in Glasgow', who had recently been in France. That official had been told that a large number of

WAAC had been sent home suffering from venereal disease. It was impossible to obtain accurate information on the question but, rightly or wrongly, soldiers believed this happened and were writing home about it or telling people. The Trade Union official claimed that WAAC girls and soldiers were to be seen in large numbers walking together in the principal promenade and other streets in Boulogne as late as 11.30 pm and 'for all that he saw there, he would be surprised if there is not some solid foundation for the stories in circulation'.

'Terrible rumours' had also reached South Wales with regard to the behaviour of soldiers and girls at Rouen,⁴⁶ and the Catholic Bishop in Kilkenny had instructed all clergy in his diocese to warn women from the pulpit against enrolling in the Corps; he gave as the reason the newspaper report of a recruiting meeting in England, in which an official of the WAAC was alleged to have stated that friendly intercourse between members of the Corps and soldiers was encouraged.⁴⁷

. In January 1918 Helen Gwynne-Vaughan returned from France and spent a week at recruiting meetings round the country, endeavouring to dispel these rumours. She explained that the WAAC refused to regard their women as untrustworthy, or to insult the Army by supposing that their soldiers were not men British women could meet with safety.⁴⁸ She insisted that letting the two sexes be friends under sensible conditions resulted in a very sound comradeship developing between them.

There were other attempts to defuse the situation. The Quartermaster at Rouen put out a memorandum:

The Base Commandant looks to all officers and other ranks to do their best to put a stop to these unfounded statements, which

are seriously affecting recruiting of WAACs in England.

With few exceptions, for which the men themselves are mostly responsible, the members of the WAAC are giving very little trouble and are behaving exceedingly well, and both officers and men can do a great deal towards stopping the mouths of a parcel of 'old women' of both sexes who have nothing better to do than to abuse the large number of respectable and hard-working women, who are doing their best to win the war by taking the place of able-bodied men both at home and in France.

The Base Commandant feels that he has only to appeal to the chivalry of all ranks to put a stop to these unfair and lying accusations by taking every opportunity of denying them both in their letters and in conversation especially when they are on leave...⁴⁹

The situation was not easy for the WAAC administrators. The Deputy Chief Controller circulated a letter received from the Area Medical Controller, who complained that she was 'having a good deal of trouble over various allegations of venereal diseases, usually based on the grounds of an offensive smell'.⁵⁰ She had been horrified to find that the matter had been freely discussed in the Hostel without any medical authority, and wished that the Administrators

should be specially warned that offensive odours are no real grounds for suspecting the disease, and that in any case the suspicions should *never* be communicated to anyone except the doctor whom they were asking to make an examination. I feel that there is not sufficient secrecy about the facts which come to the notice of the Administrators and I doubt if they quite understand the etiquette of the matter. It is sometimes very unfair to the girls in their charge.⁵¹

A memorandum sent out from HQ WAAC redefined the procedure to be adopted for dealing with cases of pregnancy and VD in women in the WAAC.⁵² The Chief Controller had ruled that pregnant women - whether married or unmarried - were to be discharged from the Corps on medical grounds, as soon as a Medical Board had confirmed their pregnancy, (as were all cases of venereal disease, whether syphilis or gonorrhoea) and the Diocesan Association Society had agreed that it would care for women who were unable to go home.⁵³ Commanding Officers were notified

that the Army Council had ruled that in the event of cases of venereal disease or pregnancy occurring amongst women of the WAAC, they would be examined by a 'Medical Woman', and if the condition was confirmed, should be discharged from the service as medically unfit.⁵⁴

It was recorded in the press that Mr Roberts, the Minister of Labour, had warned that action would be taken against anyone found to be disseminating slanderous statements about the WAAC.⁵⁵ Though the origin of the rumours was hard to trace, according to this report there were 'some pacifists who seem anxious to believe, and in any case to repeat, every foul story that, if true, would ruin the character of men and women engaged in war work'.⁵⁶ *The Bath Herald* reported a speech at a meeting in aid of the YWCA appeal for huts for WAAC, where the speaker insisted that they had 'very good reason to believe that these lies have very largely a German origin'.⁵⁷ She could not produce proof, as it was confidential, but she and others knew that partial proof at least was available.⁵⁸ Another paper described the WAAC as the 'latest victims of scandal-monger' and protested that 'apparently no body of women can be welded together into a huge organisation without the seed of mistrust being sown by some invisible foe'.⁵⁹ It was also reported that the WAAC cause had been championed from an unexpected quarter - the Archbishop of Canterbury had 'levelled a stinging rebuke to our slanderers'.⁶⁰ *The Times* quoted a letter from a company sergeant major in France, who wrote to the Commandant of the WAAC to express his indignation of the impression received by people in England 'of the Khaki girls in France'.⁶¹ He had been working for six months in a camp amongst WAAC, and found 'they all possess the highest morals'; he, too, expressed

the view that it was probably German influence at work: 'All the boys out in France think with me that the girls already out there are "the pick of dear old England". Carry on, 'WAACs' - we know you'.

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At the beginning of February 1918 Violet Markham received a letter from Frances Durham, reporting that 'rumours most hostile and prejudicial to WAAC' with all kinds of 'fantastic details' were being circulated about the conduct of the WAAC in France.⁶² It was likely to injure recruiting, and the Ministry of Labour was therefore most concerned. Auckland Geddes had suggested to Lord Derby that it would be a good plan if a small commission of independent women travelled to France to investigate and report; Lord Derby had agreed, and suggested that Violet Markham might be willing to act as a member of the commission; and, Miss Durham wrote flatteringly, they would all welcome her assistance. Detailed arrangements had yet to be fixed, but the tour would take place as soon as possible. Mrs Leach⁶³ would accompany the party, and it was suggested that the other members of the commission should be 'working women', as the testimony of women workers would be of the greatest value in reassuring the public, from which the rank and file of the Corps were drawn. The Commission's work would not only be to investigate and report, but also to publicise their findings afterwards which, it was hoped, would help reassure the public and confute the rumours.

Violet Markham agreed to take part, but it was not until three weeks later that she received a formal invitation from the Minister of Labour and, though she accepted willingly enough, she asked for certain assurances: that the Commission would be empowered to call for

statistical evidence from HQ WAAC beforehand, and that though Mrs Burleigh Leach would accompany them, she should not take part in Commission deliberations, nor the examination of witnesses.⁶⁴ Roberts replied he thought Mrs Burleigh Leach should be present if she wanted to, when and if witnesses were examined, though he conceded that she should not take part in their discussions.⁶⁵

In preparation for her trip Violet Markham wrote to her friend, the Editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, asking him whether he could provide her with the names of responsible and independent people (men or women) at the bases, who could throw light on the situation.⁶⁶ She told him that the Ministry of Labour had given her a dossier of the various letters and rumours which had reached them but they all seemed of the most vague and grotesque character, and the main charge could be easily refuted without any Commission leaving England. She was personally sceptical of there being any foundation at all for the gossip, but she did think there might be certain failures in the organisation of the Corps and its methods of discipline, which might have given rise to the rumours. She and Mrs Tennant had felt somewhat uneasy in the old days as to the appointment of officers for the WAAC; they were convinced that the whole Corps would stand or fall by the first 30 or 40 appointments made. There is no record of a reply from Spender, but the incident suggests that despite a warning by Frances Durham that the commission was not to concern itself in any way with questions of administration or organisation, Markham at least would be keeping open an eagle eye for any indication of trouble in those areas.⁶⁷

The Commission's visit to France was announced on 28 February, its purpose to 'inquire into conditions under which WAACs live and the truth of rumours which have been giving such serious concern to those who have interests of the corps at heart'.⁶⁸ Apart from Violet Markham, the other members of the Commission included Lucy Deane Streatfeild; Miss Julia Varley, the Chief Woman Organiser of Workers' Union, Birmingham; Miss Mary Carlin of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers Union of Great Britain and Ireland and Miss Muriel Ritson, of the Women's Friendly Society of Scotland.⁶⁹

The five Commissioners and Mrs Leach arrived in France on 5 March.⁷⁰ Violet Markham kept a notebook in which she recorded a personal account of their investigations.⁷¹ On 7 March they visited Boulogne, where after talking to the Base Commandant, Markham noted evidence of 'gossip in the men's letters', and the unfriendly attitude of the French.⁷² She also observed that the only adverse reports from France were about St Omer, where FANYs were not allowed to speak to WAAC, and the French attitude was unfriendly and critical.⁷³ They visited Calais, where Markham was prompted to write approvingly of the WAAC administrator there, whom she described later in a letter to May Tennant as 'a sturdy, short haired woman with real personality'.⁷⁴ At the Queen Mary's Camp in Calais they also saw the Base Commander, a Major Grey, and were told that the rumours in men's letters had begun in November 1917, were very frequent during that month and December, but that the number had receded recently.⁷⁵ Major Grey did not think the French were responsible for the trouble, and believed that jealousy was a motive on the part of many men;⁷⁶ letters from the St Omer district were apparently especially full of stories. There was

some evidence of jealousy on the part of French women of the English girls, and at both St Omer and Boulogne it seemed that French women had copied the WAAC uniform. One WAAC complained that men in the offices were very jealous of the women, and behaved unpleasantly toward them, and there were reports that some of the older men objected to such things as the girls smoking.

The Chief Censor in France was quoted as saying that there was a small percentage of girls who behaved badly, and talked of 'letters of assignation'; he also commented on critical remarks he had overheard from the French, as the first boatful of WAAC arrived.⁷⁷ Staff from a Signal Unit had complained that woman motor drivers caused problems by being out all night with officers. But despite these minor complaints, the overall majority of those consulted had expressed their approval of the women. On a visit to the BMT Depot, Violet Markham had met a Colonel Barmes, who said initially he had greatly opposed the introduction of girls on financial, moral and work grounds. Now he had a unit of 15 girls working as cooks and clerks, and had withdrawn completely his objections as to work and morals (though he still opposed the women on financial grounds, claiming they were very costly, caused many administrative difficulties, and he considered the replacement of men by women should be confined to England).

The Commission returned to England on the evening of 13 March, after an interview with Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, who commented in her War Diary that 'These ladies have not been good for discipline as it is reported that some of them discussed the administration with the women and questioned soldiers passing on the road on behaviour of WAAC'.⁷⁸

The Hon. Dorothy Pickford, a WAAC administrator in France at this time, expressed doubt as to whether the visit would have any definite result.⁷⁹ Mrs Streatfeild and Miss Julia Varley⁸⁰ had spent a night at her camp where they had

addressed the workers on the necessity of correct deportment, but they, conscious in their own rectitude, are only furious that a word should be said against them. They have their standard of behaviour, and very few transgress it, but it isn't always our standard, and with...weary years experience of the Girls Clubs, I haven't much hope of ever altering it, so it is as well that younger and more Sanguine Spirits are in command. In my opinion the behaviour is exceedingly good. There was one exception, a temporary cook we have here - a nasty creature -and there I was truly sorry for the UA [Unit Administrator] who was let down badly and in front of the woman. She was had up before the CO to be fined, the first time such a thing had happened, and the silly old man, instead of making it very awe-inspiring, treated it as a semi-joke, and asked if she was really a soldier, and finally let her off, saying he was sure it would not occur again. Naturally she is one up, and doesn't care a blow what happens.

Grace was furious, and went next day and had the CO on his knees with a promise to uphold her always in future. She never takes a thing lying down, the Corps need have no fears for its dignity so long as she represents it...⁸¹

Though reassured by her visit to the WAAC camps in France, where she was certain things were 'on the right lines', Violet Markham was concerned about the WAAC in England. Soon after her return from France she told May Tennant that she and Lucy Streatfeild were a 'good deal worried' about the attitude of Mary Macarthur.⁸² She had dined with Mary one evening, and though the latter would say little, she had gathered that there was 'a great deal of trouble brewing over the conditions in England, and Mary's game is apparently to let it grow so that confusion and difficulty should be created all round'.⁸³ Mary was 'not in the least anxious that we should step in and reform the conditions' nor 'stop the folly of the creation of the Penguins'. Markham's impression was that Mary was out to damage the whole

recruitment of women for the Army in every possible way, and that she thought the best way to achieve this for the present was 'to sit tight and allow people like Lady Gertrude⁹⁴ and Mrs Leach to involve themselves in every imaginable absurdity, and then when the situation is thoroughly muddled up make a violent row'.⁹⁵

Mary Macarthur believed that the military authorities were out to run Government factories and workshops by girls discharged from civilian employment and re-enlisted under the WAAC at lower wages and under Military control. Markham did not know how far this 'genial proposal' was true, and if anything of that kind was in fact proposed, she felt it should be checked. Mary Macarthur had claimed that her office was 'periodically besieged by weeping girls, members of the federation who have joined the WAAC and who come to her praying to be got out of it'. Her attitude was to advise everybody against enlistment 'and in that normal spirit of mixed tragedy and boastfulness with which we are all familiar she exclaimed dramatically that her action would probably land her in prison'.⁹⁶ Markham herself was not optimistic about the situation: when she thought of Mary Macarthur on the one hand 'and people like Lord Acheson⁹⁷ and Mrs Leach on the other the outlook seems a pretty hopeless one'. The centre of the storm would be in England - and the pacifists were 'clearly out for trouble'.⁹⁸

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The Report of the Commission to France was published as a Parliamentary Paper on 20 March 1918.⁹⁹ The group had spent eight days in France, visited twenty-nine camps and hostels, interviewed Chief Controllers and Administrators of the Corps, and discussed the

situation with eighty people, including the Adjutant General, Base Commandants, and other officers. They had stayed in both large and small camps, and as a result, felt qualified to judge the general conditions under which the women lived, worked and were housed. They found 'no justification of any kind for the vague accusations of immoral conduct on a large scale which had been circulated about the WAAC.'⁹⁰ The rumours and vague tales spread about the WAAC were best refuted by the official returns, which not only proved that the statements were untrue, but that up to the present, the number of 'undesirable women' who had found their way into the Corps had been very small.

According to their sources,⁹¹ in March 1918 the strength of the WAAC in France stood at 6,023 women. An examination of medical records in England and France revealed that of the 6,023, just 21 pregnancy cases (about .3%) had been reported since the arrival of the Corps in France. Of these, 2 were married, and the majority had become pregnant before coming to France. 12 cases of venereal disease were recorded, and of that category, several cases were of old standing. In addition, 19 women had been returned to England on disciplinary grounds (ten for inefficiency). 59 had been discharged on medical grounds (including the 12 cases of VD mentioned) and 21 on compassionate grounds, for family reasons. Between 1 July 1917 and 11 March 1918 a total of 88 offences were recorded.⁹² Such figures were in themselves 'a refutation of the current slanders of women already enrolled'.⁹³

The Commission recorded its unanimous conviction that up to the present every effort had been made by the authorities to safeguard the

position, and - with exceptions - the conduct of the WAAC in France had 'been upright and self-respective'. It did comment on what it described as the inherent problems of the enterprise:

The employment of women for the first time in history as an organised corps of workers in close connection with the Army has been a new and, in some respects, a revolutionary experiment. Such an organisation involves the re-evaluation of many long-standing conventions, and this fact in itself is apt to excite comment. We feel that at every turn a situation so novel calls for the utmost care and vigilance on the part of those who are responsible for the control and discipline of the Corps. The wholly abnormal conditions under which women are working with the Army, not in their own country but in a foreign land, lend themselves to misrepresentations of a character which do not arise in civil employment at home. Special watchfulness is, therefore, essential on the part of the authorities as regards the personnel of the Corps, and the avoidance of even accidental situations which, innocent in themselves, may give rise to unfounded rumours.⁹⁴

They had examined the camps and hostels in which the girls lived: sanitary arrangements were good; hot and cold water was provided; the comfort of the girls had been 'considered in every way compatible with a state of active service', and the conditions were very simple though not 'in the wrong sense of the word, rough'. Recreation rooms and huts were bright and cheerful (the women had more cubic space than was allocated to men) and the Commission had proved for itself that there was no hardship in sleeping on Army beds in Army blankets. Army rations were abundant; food uniformly good and well-cooked. Whatever the disadvantages of the open-air life in cold and muddy weather, their general impression of the physical condition of the girls had been one of abounding good health.⁹⁵

The Commission expressed its admiration for the discipline and morale of the Corps, as regards both Administrators and the rank and file, and reported that the military note in the daily life of the women's camps was not strongly marked. Such drill and route marches

as were enforced seemed to be more in the nature of physical exercise, with a hygienic rather than a military value. Many of the camps were necessarily situated close to those of the men: in such localities administrators - with a view to 'general welfare and propriety' - endeavoured to ensure that women marched in companies to and from work as far as possible: 'Clearly it would be impossible to allow individual girls liberty to come and go at will in an area where soldiers, prisoners, and native labourers are all to be found'.⁹⁶

The Commission reported that Base Commandants and other officers had praised the work of the WAAC on duty,⁹⁷ and their good behaviour during leisure hours: 'The appreciation shown by the soldiers for the work of the women and their obvious goodwill towards the Corps made a pleasant impression on the Commission'.⁹⁸ All the officers interviewed had expressed their indignation at the injustice of the accusations against the Corps. As far as the origins of the rumours were concerned, the Commission found it difficult to sum up the causes which had probably led to the circulation of stories against the WAAC, but suggested that 'a state of war tends in itself to create a somewhat abnormal and excited mentality, and that the general atmosphere produced is one peculiarly favourable to the growth of fictitious tales'.⁹⁹ As the figures showed, there had been some cases of misconduct and unsatisfactory behaviour among the WAAC, and there were - unsurprisingly in a large body of women - some whose behaviour was less discreet and seemly than could have been wished. Upon such small foundations it was possible that 'a vast superstructure of slander' was 'easily reared', especially in a foreign country.

The advent of the WAAC had been greeted with both surprise and some dismay among some of the French. The Report noted that French customs and traditions were far removed from the general social ideas which lately had come to regulate intercourse between young British men and women, and it claimed that the comradeship between the sexes commonplace in Britain was unknown in France. The apparent freedom of social intercourse between them was not made more comprehensible to the French just because the men and women in question wore uniform. The French Army had not yet enrolled women workers as auxiliaries, and apparently it viewed the situation with some perplexity, and at times the position was 'open to misconstruction'. But the Commission optimistically believed that French views were slowly changing, and the work of the WAAC in France was becoming increasingly appreciated by the French, who were showing some interest in establishing a corps of women on similar lines.¹⁰⁰

Another source of the rumours had been letters from soldiers on active service, writing home to England: various motives had been suggested. The Commission had been told frequently that certain men, dislodged from non-combatant tasks in the bases by women, had in some cases shown jealousy and hostility toward the WAAC. There were also men who did not wish their womenfolk to be exposed to 'possible perils of existence in a foreign country', and they might write discouraging letters. In yet other cases the motivating factor had been what the Commission described as an 'element of sex jealousy', (which could arise in more than one form), or, possibly, a desire to liven up the monotonous record of the weekly letter home.¹⁰¹

The Commission believed that regulations governing the social relations between WAAC and soldiers were sensible and broad-minded, and they had received constant tributes as to the good influence of the women on the men. Officers, Chaplains, officials of the YMCA - all had praised the advantage to soldiers 'of the possibility of frank and wholesome comradeship of women of their own race and the graver social dangers which such comradeship tended to avert'.¹⁰² They were told that some of the scandalous talk about the WAAC had emanated from some of the low class 'estaminets'¹⁰³ who had lost the custom of British soldiers since the WAAC arrived. WAAC were allowed passes from their Administrator to entertain or be entertained by soldiers at recognised places of amusement provided by YMCA, or Church Army, for example, and on occasion they would go in a group, accompanied by a forewoman. They could also invite men to entertainments they organised in their camps and hostels.¹⁰⁴ Cafes and restaurants were out of bounds, except for a few tea shops, and girls must have a pass if they intended to be absent from any meal. Final roll call was at 8.30 p.m., and if any girl intended to be absent then, she too must have a pass. The Commission believed that thanks to the careful measures to keep close touch with the movements of girls all day, dangers which might face girls in the zone of the armies were largely mitigated, and the present position of the Corps in France compared very favourably with perils run by girls in ordinary employment in England, where neither health nor morality was so well safeguarded. Complaints had been made to the Commission against the regulation which forbade social intercourse between officers and WAAC rank and

file, but the Commission believed it was a good rule, and should be enforced.

Despite its conclusion that the stories about the behaviour of WAAC in France were slanderous and untrue, the Commission wanted to impress upon the authorities their conviction that as the Corps grew the difficulties of management would increase, and if the good tone and good morals were to be preserved, the utmost care must be exercised in the selection of WAAC personnel drafted to France, and it recommended that powers of dismissal and transfer from the Corps in France should be exercised more freely than they were. Special attention should be paid to the selection of administrators, and to the drafting of women to the more lonely units of the Corps, especially to the advanced posts, where they were frequently brought in touch with men passing to and from the line.¹⁰⁵ Greater danger existed in those localities than in the less emotional surroundings of the bases. The Commission praised the work of the YWCA in providing recreational facilities for the WAAC, observing that 'The monotony of life in France under present conditions is far greater than many people suspect'. The YWCA had established 15 huts and 8 clubs in France, and more were planned.

In conclusion, the Report repeated the Commission's belief that the vague charges of immoral conduct on a large scale brought against the Corps had no foundation in fact: they had heard only occasional grumblings of a minor character from members of the Corps, and they believed that the majority were happy and contented.

Despite the generally approving tone of the Report, it was not immediately made public. A few days after it had been printed,

Roberts sent a copy to Lord Derby, suggesting that its conclusions were 'satisfactory', and that it should be circulated to the War Cabinet,¹⁰⁶ to which Lord Derby agreed, and added that he was strongly in favour of publishing the Report.¹⁰⁷ A few days later Derby changed his mind and decided it would be better to publish 'the substance not the report'.¹⁰⁸ But even if it had been made public, the impact of the Report at this time was likely to have been insignificant.

On 21 March what has been described as one of the two gravest military crises of World War 1 began, when at 4.30 am the Germans launched an attack on the front held by the Fifth Army.¹⁰⁹ It was 'the most concentrated artillery bombardment the world had every known';¹¹⁰ nearly 6,000 German guns opened fire along a forty mile front of the British Fifth and Third Armies between Arras in the north to south of the Somme. For the next three and a half months the events of the Western Front overshadowed such petty matters as rumours about the WAAC, in the minds, at least, of the military authorities, though the Ministry of Labour was keen to make the most of a favourable report. Early in April Lord Derby was asked if he could provide accounts of the WAAC in the recent battle.¹¹¹ In order to encourage recruiting, the Ministry of Labour wanted to issue a Press statement based on the report of the Commission concerning the allegations against the WAAC, and such information could be usefully published at the same time. Whether by coincidence or design, on the same day that the request was made, *The Times* reported a War Office announcement that the Army Council had received excellent reports of the WAAC during the heavy fighting in France: 'All reports bear out the fact that WAAC during the crisis had more than justified their

existence - and had well maintained the credit of their sex and the Army to which they belong'.¹¹²

According to Violet Markham, both Lord Derby and the Adjutant General expressed enthusiasm for the Commission's Report to be published in the form of a White Paper and presented to Parliament, though as Markham told Julia Varley, Lord Derby had been anxious to omit a sentence about intercourse being forbidden with French civilians, as he thought that might be a little wounding to their Allies.¹¹³ Markham had agreed to a few words being deleted but she had 'dug her toes in very firmly' about other changes suggested: the War Office had actually proposed to leave out all reference to cases of venereal disease.¹¹⁴ She and all the Ministry of Labour people had protested, but the War Office were extremely sensitive on the subject, and both Sir Reginald Brade and Lord Derby feared adverse criticism if any reference was made to the matter. The Ministry of Labour had pointed out that to omit any reference at all would at once excite public suspicion. Brade wanted to add an explanatory sentence to show how small was the proportion of such cases; Markham thought the situation should be dealt with by a plain statement of fact: explanations would produce the situation it was hoped to avoid. She had insisted that absolute frankness and candour were essential in dealing with the cases of immoral conduct which had come to their notice, but she had agreed that after listing the 21 pregnancy cases, and 12 cases of VD, percentage figures should be added.

On 15 April *The Times* announced that the slanderous charges against the WAAC had been disproved, and published lengthy quotes from the Report.¹¹⁵ From this time the rumours seem to have decreased, and

to emphasise official disapproval toward those responsible for spreading them, convictions provided further discouragement. The Rev. R.H. Quick, a Primitive Methodist Minister from Congleton, Cheshire, was fined £40 at the Congleton Borough Police Court for spreading false reports regarding the WAAC.¹¹⁶ A day or two later the *Western Mail* reported a fine of £50 against the local secretary of the Unofficial Reform Committee.¹¹⁷ W.H. Mainwaring of Brynhyfryd, Clydach Vale, was charged under the Defence of the Realm Act with spreading false reports at a public meeting on March 3. The Public Prosecutor reported that Mainwaring had proposed a resolution (which had been seconded) calling upon the Government to put houses of immorality at the front out of bounds for the troops. In submitting that resolution, the defendant had said that hundreds of English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish women were being sent like cattle to these places, and that soldiers were in a line a quarter of a mile long, awaiting their turn.

As long as the women's corps existed there would be people who enjoyed making lurid accusations, and others willing to believe them. Presumably as a further contribution towards reassuring the public of the respectability of the Corps, it was arranged that the Queen should become Commandant-in-Chief of the WAAC. The Chief Controller sent out a Directive to Area Controllers, notifying them that henceforth the Corps would be known as the 'Queen Mary's Women's Army Auxiliary Corps'.¹¹⁸ The Directive declared that it would 'be a great incentive to all Members to reach a high standard of efficiency and good behaviour which it is our earnest endeavour to attain, and that it will be a still greater stimulus towards the feeling of *esprit de*

corps which is the foundation on which an Army is built up'. It was, in fact, to be known as QMAAC, not QMWAAC.¹¹⁹

What finally ensured that the WAAC - or at least the WAAC in France - were regarded as a genuine part of the Army was a bombing raid which occurred at the end of May, killing several members of QMAAC.¹²⁰ The women had been living in huts outside a town which had frequently been bombed, and they had been removed out of the town limits in order to be safe from air raids. Shelters were provided, in which they took refuge when warning of air raids was given. A warning was given on Wednesday night; all the women went to the shelters, but a bomb fell directly on a section of a shelter, killing several women outright and wounding others. The War Correspondent for *The Times* reported that he had talked to 'leading members of Queen Mary's Corps, who, while sorrowing deeply for their sisters, are sadly proud of the baptism which the Corps has received. This incident, they feel, has confirmed their right to khaki, and makes them one in sympathy and sacrifice with the fighting services'.¹²¹

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This episode in the history of the women's corps raises the question of how far, if at all, sexual standards were changed by the war experience, though unfortunately, evidence for a satisfactory conclusion is hard to come by. Two immediate difficulties emerge: first, how to make judgements about sexual standards - is it sufficient simply to measure them by the percentage of illegitimate births, for example? - and secondly, how to establish what actually happened in private between men and women (or, for that matter, between men and men and women and women).

Winifred Holtby took up the question of sexual conduct in the first half of the 20th century while examining a claim 'that modern girls are sexually promiscuous, undisciplined and self-indulgent', and she maintains that statistics on the subject are unobtainable; people can only speak from their own experience.¹²² Having attended a middle-class boarding school for seven years, until 1916, where they had 'talked pretty freely', she was personally unaware of a single girl who had experienced physical intimacy with a man (and she could not say for sure that even one of her contemporaries knew the precise nature of Lesbianism). As a teacher in both day and boarding schools after 1922, she recalls only one case where a pupil had 'become intimate with men'; from her college days she could not conclude for certain if any of her contemporaries had engaged in pre-marital sex.

As a further illustration, Holtby looks back to her year in the QMAAC, among girls 'recruited from every type of young women in England, including some of the roughest and least reputable'.¹²³ At one depot, which accommodated over a thousand girls, she knew for certain of only one case of pregnancy; similarly, at the small camp in Hucchenneville near Abbeville, where she was Hostel Forewoman for nine months, just one girl was sent home pregnant.¹²⁴ She was a domestic worker, who had entered the WAAC as a general scrubber and Holtby describes her elsewhere as 'so stupid that I had on several occasions reported her as presumably mentally defective...The father was an Australian private of presumably the same calibre'.¹²⁵

Holtby's account of leisure activities at the camp at Hucchenneville indicates that a wholesome innocence was their chief characteristic:

I knew intimately about twenty of the fifty-two girls resident there - girls drawn from North of England factories, post offices, and domestic service; we talked with considerable latitude. All the girls picked up temporary 'boys' among the English or Australian Tommies in neighbouring camps. All walked, played, danced and flirted with them. It was my duty after the Armistice, as hostel forewoman, to accompany the parties allowed to attend dances organised by the soldiers in recreation huts or French school-rooms hired for the purpose. We used to drive off in lorries or mule-wagons, an escort for each girl. As a matter of course, lights were extinguished, men put their arms round our waists, and thus rode with us - a practice that I, brought up in extremely respectable middle-class surroundings, at first found embarrassing. But I soon grew to enjoy it as well as any one; to recognise the cuddling on the outward journey and the kissing on the homeward one, as courtesies of a society to which it seemed quite natural. I never witnessed conduct which struck my unsophisticated eyes as unseemly. Drunkenness (except for one middle-aged Liverpool docker's wife - a war widow of over forty) was unknown among the girls in our particular camp, and sternly suppressed, by their own code of manners, among the men who came to visit us.¹²⁶

Holtby acknowledges that she may have been unusually naive, and their camp exceptional, but in the absence of evidence to the contrary, her description of the scene in France rings true. For a comparison with sexual conduct in a different setting, Holtby considers the North of England villages which she knew well, where, she claims, many betrothed couples followed 'the old country custom of marrying only after pregnancy'.¹²⁷ But this does not necessarily indicate a carefree attitude towards sex: Elizabeth Roberts, another observer of courting practices in towns in the north of England during this period, reports that courting for years was common, and she suggests that such lengthy courtships can be taken as 'an indication of the strict self-control exercised by the great majority of young couples'.¹²⁸

One of the reasons for the 'almost total reticence on the part of parents in discussing sexual matters with their children, and the strict control of encounters between boys and girls, was their great

fear of pre-marital sex, with the risk of conception'.¹²⁹ In all the families Roberts interviewed, there had been unanimous condemnation of sex outside marriage, and she records the impossibility of estimating the numbers of girls who enjoyed premarital sex, because of the considerable reticence on the subject: the oral evidence suggests that the practice of premarital sex was very limited.¹³⁰ As for illegitimacy, the figures indicate that it was not numerically a sizeable problem: on a national scale for the period of Roberts's study it stood at an average between 4-5% of all live births.¹³¹ There were some variations between both years and towns; twice in the 50 year period of her investigation Barrow's illegitimacy rate was above 5% [in 1930 - 1932], and Roberts concludes that the exceptional high rates for Lancaster in 1918 [11.8%] and 1919 [9%] 'may be explained by war fever and heightened emotions in two garrisons towns'.¹³²

With the little evidence available, it is difficult to generalise about sexual standards in this period or the conduct of the WAAC during the war, though this has not prevented some people from doing so. Fischer and Dubois, the authors of a book quoted above, claim that:

there is ample evidence to prove that a great many of the WAACs entertained erotic relations with combatants and others. Without detailing the evidence in our possession, we need only quote the words of Trix, in *NOT SO QUIET*: 'I've got to wondering', says Trix, 'what's wrong with my appearance if a sub. doesn't ask me to sleep with him'.¹³³

It seems to have been fashionable in the thirties to make such accusations against the poor WAAC: the publication in 1930 of *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, by Brig. General Frank Crozier, which contained an attack on the WAAC and VAD, brought Winifred Holtby to their

defence.¹³⁴ She complained of a number of references in war-books of various kinds, which had recently made her wonder

whether I have an extraordinarily defective memory, or whether there is some peculiar pleasure to be derived from defaming the character of women war-workers. A grotesque travesty of Women's war experience is now being published by Messrs Werner Laurie, and according to an advertisement they recently sent me, is selling at the rate of 1,000 copies a day. ...any member of QMAAC can detect at a glance its obvious and complete lack of reality [but] the general public cannot be expected to know this and presumably accepts the anonymous author's support of General Crozier's legend that the French base was turned into 'an orgy of lust' by 'sex-maddened girls!'.¹³⁵

Holtby insisted that in all the time she was in France she 'saw nothing that could possibly be described as the mildest form of orgy'. Apart from anything else, there simply would not have been time: 'We were all worked much too hard; our hours off duty were too short, our supervision too strict, our mobility too circumscribed, even after the Armistice, to give us much opportunity for further activities'.¹³⁶

In 1936 Holtby had concluded in her study of the sexual habits of 'modern girls' that she could not 'form any clear impression of how far, how frequently, and with what clear mandate of conscience the "modern girl" is sexually promiscuous. I read the books; I observe the exceptions to whom accidental misfortune brings publicity; but I do not know - and I do not believe that anybody knows - the exact state of affairs'.¹³⁷ The sexual habits of the WAAC during the First World War must be subject to the same conclusion.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 9 [Pages 247 to 280]

1. 'Maisons Tolérées' were the state-regulated brothels in France, where prostitutes were given regular medical checks against venereal disease. See Appendix V.
2. 'Note on Alleged Immoral Conduct of the WAAC in France'; undated (around January 1918); LSE Markham 4/14. This 'Note' was written by a member of staff from the Employment Department [probably Frances Durham] and sent to Markham to provide her with background information about the decision to send an investigation to France. It explained that throughout the period it had been recruiting women for the WAAC the Employment Department had encountered difficulties in all parts of the country because of the 'prevalence of rumours of a damaging character with regard to the alleged immoral conduct of the members of the Corps in France'. It had become evident that rumours were gaining currency among all classes, and causing many would-be volunteers to withhold offers of service. All information had been passed on to the WAAC authorities, and whenever possible, the War Office had taken action against the persons concerned under DORA, but because of the vague nature of the accusations, and the difficulty of identifying those responsible, such action had only been possible in a few cases.
3. Ibid.
4. For a melodramatic example of some of the assumptions made about the sexual behaviour of men and women in war time conditions, see H.C. Fischer and Dr E.X. Dubois, *SEXUAL LIFE DURING THE WORLD WAR* (1937). For the attitude of the military authorities, see Suzann Buckley, 'The failure to resolve the problem of venereal disease among the troops in Britain during World War I', in *War and Society. A Yearbook of Military History, Vol. 2*, edited by Brian Bond and Ian Roy (1977).
5. Irene Clephane, *Towards Sex Freedom* (1935), pp. 195 - 6.
6. Ibid.
7. John Costello, *Love, Sex and War, Changing Values, 1939 - 45* (1985), p. 17.
8. Ibid., p. 10.
9. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1979 edition), p. 270.
10. Ibid., p.271.
11. Ibid., p. 272.
12. Fischer and Dubois, op. cit., pp. 47 - 8.
13. Ibid., pp. 48 - 9.

14. Ibid., p. 54.
15. Ibid., pp. 55 and 70.
16. Helen Gwynne Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, op. cit., pp. 48 - 9.
17. Ibid., p. 49.
18. Edward Beardsley, 'Allied Against Sin: American and British responses to Venereal Disease in World War I' in *Medical History*, 20, 1976, p. 189 - 202. Towers describes the British military during the First World War as 'still dominated by a class leadership which defended the belief that army morale was contingent on sexual activity, they were therefore loath to allow civilian interference in shutting down brothels and were quite intolerant of any moral arguments on sexual promiscuity'. Towers, op. cit., p. 77.
19. Beardsley quotes General Childs at the Imperial War Conference in April 1917, describing how when he first served in India they had a bazaar of native women who were 'kept clean', and that when he commanded a company he had lectured his men on the prevention of disease, and how to have connection with a woman without acquiring the disease. Imperial War Conference, Minutes of Proceedings; 12th Day, 'Temptations of Overseas Soldiers in London', 24 April 1917, p. 197, PRO CAB 32/1.
20. Childs went on to say that the 'system was killed' and any regiment now in India which attempted to keep such a bazaar 'would raise a great outcry straight off'. He also explained that in France if a case of VD occurred among the troops and could be traced to a *maison tolérée*, they would complain to the Prefect that a woman had given VD to a soldier. The woman would be arrested, brought before the medical authorities and examined, put in hospital if she had VD, and would probably lose her licence for six months. Childs told the Imperial War Conference that he received dozens of letters asking him to bring pressure to bear on the authorities in France to place out of bounds all the regular establishments and State-controlled houses of accommodation, but that 'Far from being placed out of bounds, the men are informed by company commanders that these places are controlled by the State, and that they are not to go with the villagers of France indiscriminately contracting venereal disease'. Ibid.
21. Imperial War Conference 1917, Minutes of Proceedings, PRO CAB 32/1. The Resolution asked 'That the attention of the authorities concerned be called to the temptations to which our soldiers on leave are subjected, and that such authorities be empowered by legislation or otherwise (1) to protect our men by having the streets, the neighbourhood of camps, and other places of public resort, kept clear, so far as practicable, of women of the prostitute class, and (2) to take any other steps that may be necessary to remedy the serious evil that exists'. Item XXIV, 'Temptations of Overseas Soldiers', p. xvi, ibid.

22. *The Times*, 27 March 1918.
23. Deputy Chief Controller QMWAAC, 10 April 1918, IWM Army 314/72; J.H. Turnbull, Controller of Medical Services, WAAC: 'Memorandum re accusations of soldiers against women of the WAAC', 8 April 1918, IWM Army 314/73.
24. DORA, of course, would apply only in Britain, not abroad.
25. 'Brothels at Havre. Connivance by authorities at soldiers visits to', 6 December 1917, PRO WO32/5597.
26. Field-Marshal Sir D. Haig to Secretary, WO, 29 December 1917, referring to WO Letter No. Notices 1917, 4061 (A.G.3), PRO WO32/5597.
27. Revd. C.W. Thomas to Mr Leggett, 12 December 1917, enclosed in letter from Private Sec. to Bishop of London to WO, 22 December 1917, *ibid.*
28. Field Marshal Haig to Secretary, WO, (2A) January 1918, *Ibid.*
29. Charles Carrington, *Soldier from the Wars Returning* (1965).
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 162 - 3. .
31. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
32. 103 HC Deb. 5s, cols. 1187 - 92, 25 February 1918. Macpherson's statement was widely cited as an indication of the immoral attitude of the WO, if not the whole Army; eg *The Daily News and Leader*, 2 March 1918; Letter to Editor from Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 March 1918.
33. War Cabinet 366 (Item 12), 18 March 1918, PRO CAB 23/5.
34. G.H. Fowke (AG GHQ, British Armies in France) to Macready, AG, WO, 20 March 1918, PRO WO32/5597.
35. Field-Marshal Sir D. Haig to Secretary, WO, 4 June 1918, *ibid.*
36. Haig to Sec, WO, 16 June 1918, 24 July 1918, 2 September 1918; R.W. Brade, Army Council, to Field Marshal Commander in Chief, 4 September 1918, *ibid.* Haig believed that excluding men from *maisons tolérées* would simply drive them to use women 'en carte' on the streets, and that the risk of VD was vastly greater in cases of intercourse with prostitutes not belonging to *maison tolérées* than in those who did. To support this contention he provided figures he had been given which applied to Paris in 1917. Of 350 women in *maisons tolérées*, just 5 cases of VD had been recorded (1.4%); of Femmes en carte - 4,933, of which 978 (19.8%) had been found to have VD, and of 4,832 clandestine prostitutes, 1,759 (36.3%) had VD. Haig to WO, 4 June 1918, *ibid.*

37. Le Contre-Amiral Didelot, Gouverneur du Havre to Monsieur le General Commandant la 3 Region, 2 May 1918; President of the Council, War Minister, to General, head of French Mission to the British Forces, 16 May 1918; Director of Services, 16 June 1918, PRO WO32/5597.
38. Superintendent of Gravelle to Mayor of Gravelle, 28 June 1918. Ibid. (Translated from French by Monique Bertoni).
39. Mrs Kate Gilmour to Mr Barnes, Ministry of Labour, 27 November 1917, PRO NATS 1/80.
40. Ibid.
41. The Almeric Paget Military Massage Corps.
42. Mrs Gilmour to Mr Barnes, 27 November 1917, op. cit.
43. Extract from Report from Yorkshire and East Midlands Division, 5 November 1917; Minute by Miss MacArthur of Nottingham Exchange. LSE Markham 4/14.
44. E.M. Hope-Dunbar to Miss Saunders, 21 November 1917, Ibid.
45. Extract from Report from Scottish Division [of Employment Exchanges], 19 December 1917, Ibid.
46. Extract from Report from Wales Division, 30 December 1917, Ibid. Sylvia Pankhurst was reported as saying at a WAAC recruitment meeting in Wales, in July 1917, in connection with the WAAC, that 'No women's honour would be safe in France', and that she would not trust a daughter of hers, even with a British soldier. M.H. Mackworth (Commissioner) to Miss Clapham, Principal Officer, Women's Section, 10 July 1917, Enclosure from Headmistress of Carmarthen Education Committee, Parcyrhun Council Infants' School, Ammanford, 9 July 1917, PRO NATS 1/76.
47. Extract from Report from Irish Division, LSE Markham 4/14.
48. *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 26 January 1918.
49. Lt. Walter Penner, AA and QMG at Rouen, 10 February 1918, LSE Markham 4/14.
50. Deputy Chief Controller (No. 45), 18 February 1918, IWM Army 314/52.
51. Ibid.
52. Confidential Note (No. 41) from HQ QAAC, 11 February 1918, quoting memo of 22 January 1918, issued by Controller of Medical Services. IWM Army 314/47.
53. The Ruling issued by the Controller of Medical Services was retrospective, and applied to all women who till then had been allowed to return home on indefinite leave without pay. The

Controller of Administration at WAAC HQ asked for a list of all pregnant women in the WAAC, to enable Medical Services to make arrangements for them to be boarded and medically rejected from the WAAC. (No. 38) from Controller of Administration, HQ WAAC, 8 February 1918, IWM Army 3'4/41.

54. B.B. Cubitt, WO to General Officers Commanding-in-Chief and General Officers Commanding Commands and Districts at Home, PRO WO32/11402. In April the Secretary of State for War received a deputation headed by Lord Sydenham, to discuss the possibilities of a medical examination for venereal disease of all men to be discharged from the Army. On this occasion the question of treatment of members of the WAAC was brought up by some of the female members of the deputation, who urged that WAAC members infected with venereal disease should be treated in the same way as men - that is, punished, but not discharged. The Secretary of State refused to alter the previous decision of the Army council. Minute 8, P.S. to S. of S, 11 April 1918, *ibid*.
55. *Western Daily News*, 14 February 1918, p. 6.
56. *Ibid*. This may have been as slanderous as the rumours it sought to refute.
57. *Bath Herald*, 21 February 1918.
58. Blaming Germans for spreading rumours about the WAAC was common. Helen Gwynne Vaughan writes that 'as censorship revealed, enemy agents started stories'. *Service with the Army*, op. cit., p. 50. Unfortunately she does not cite the source of her evidence.
59. *Reynolds Weekly Newspapers*, 24 February 1918.
60. *Ibid*.
61. *The Times*, 22 February 1918.
62. Frances Durham to Miss Markham, 2 February, 1918, LSE Markham 4/11.
63. Mrs Burleigh Leach, Commandant of WAAC.
64. V. Markham to Rt. Hon. G.H. Roberts, Ministry of Labour, 24 February 1918, LSE Markham 4/13. Markham told Roberts that she had concluded the enquiry had been abandoned, for it was three weeks since she had been told by Frances Durham of the proposal, and apart from a meeting with the latter a couple of days later, she had heard nothing since.
65. Roberts to Markham, [26] February 1918. Markham was not satisfied, and she and Lucy Streatfeild visited Mrs Burleigh Leach in person. Markham then informed Roberts that she considered it important that they should not be open to criticism that they had been escorted by WO officials; that

would damage the value of the report in the eyes of the public.
Markham to Roberts, 28 February 1918, LSE Markham 4/13.

66. Markham to A. Spender, *Westminster Gazette*, 28 February 1918, Ibid.
67. Durham to Markham, 5 February 1918, LSE Markham 4/13.
68. *The Times*, 'Rumours about WAACS. Women Commissioners to visit France', 28 February 1918, p. 9.
69. *Morning Post*, 5 March 1918, and Vol. 13, War Diary, Chief Controller WAAC, March 1 - March 31 1918, PRO WO95/84. See Appendix VII for biographical notes on Streatfield and Varley.
70. Vol. 13, War Diary, Chief Controller WAAC, March 1 - March 31, 1918, PRO WO95/85.
71. Notebook, LSE Markham 4/13.
72. This is in marked contrast to the view of F. Tennyson Jesse, who visited France as a journalist about this time, and who wrote that the local French people were 'quite charming' to the WAAC and other women's uniformed corps, such as VAD, and that 'when they first came, the French met them at every station with bouquets of flowers...'. F. Tennyson Jesse, *The Sword of Deborah. First-hand impressions of the British Women's Army in France*, (1918), p. 74.
73. Tennyson Jesse commented of the FANNIES and VADs that 'they rank officially as officers. Among themselves, of course, they have their own officers, but socially, so to speak, every Fanny and VAD is ranked with the officers of the Army'. Ibid., pp. 18 - 19.
74. Markham to Tennant, 11 June 1918, Ibid.
75. Notebook, Markham, op. cit.
76. Tennyson Jesse writes that she found 'no trace of sex-jealousy in any department whatsoever. I only met genuine, unemotional, level-headed admiration on the part of the men towards the women working against them. The D. of T. [Director of Transportation] was no exception, and opined that if the war hadn't done anything else, at least it had killed that irritating masculine "gag" that women couldn't work together.' Tennyson Jesse, op. cit., pp. 21 - 2.
77. Notebook, Markham, entry for 11 March 1918, Rouen. The words were: '*C'est pratique; c'est pratane; C'est pratique?*' I have been unable to get this translated.
78. War Diary, Chief Controller WAAC, Vol. 13, Havre, 13 March 1918, op. cit.

79. Letter from D. Pickford, WAAC Administrator, BEF, 14 March 1918, IWM Document Ref. DS/MISC/33.
80. Pickford wrote of Julia Varley that 'Social distinctions just did not exist for her, and I wish you could have heard her ordering tea and hot water when I took her to her room at night'. Ibid. In another letter Pickford described Varley as 'the queerest little creature...I believe she's quite a light in the labour world? She began life in a Yorkshire factory, and we know the type well, but for the others she was something quite new...'. Letter to Molly, D. Pickford, *ibid*.
81. Ibid.
82. V. Markham to May Tennant, 19 March 1918, LSE Markham 4/13.
83. Ibid.
84. Lady Gertrude Crawford, see Chapter 10.
85. Markham to Tennant, 19 March 1918, *op. cit*.
86. Ibid.
87. Lt Col. Viscount Acheson (Earl of Gosford, M.C.) succeeded to the head of AGXI after Lt Col. Corsellis joined the MNS.
88. Markham to Tennant, 19 March 1918, *op. cit*. In fact, there is little evidence to suggest that trade unionists, whether women or men, objected greatly to any of the women' military corps.
89. Parliamentary Paper, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Ministry of Labour to enquire into the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in France*, 20 March 1918, IWM Army 32^a/2.
90. The Chairman of the Commission, Mrs Lucy Anne Streatfeild, wrote in her own informal report that it was 'totally untrue that any women members of the WAACs were sent to houses of immorality at any time. These women were out under the strictest supervision, as members of a corps enrolled. It would be quite impossible for any of these women to enter or make use of a *maison tolérée* without its being known and there is no evidence of such an event having occurred'. Copy of Statement by Lucy Anne Evelyn Streatfeild, LSE Markham 4/13.
91. WAAC records in France were kept at Abbeville. Statistics were supplied to the Commission by the Chief Controller from these records, and also by the Woman Medical Officer at Endell St. Hospital, where there were records on every case of disease among women evacuated from France.
92. The punishments given were: 17 fines; 41 confined to camp; 23 restriction of privileges and 7 admonitions.
93. *Report of the Commission of Enquiry*, 20 March 1918, *op. cit*.

94. Ibid.
95. This is borne out to some extent by official figures for sickness, which were fairly low. There were 9 women doctors attached to the Corps, and routine inspections of women and camps took place at frequent intervals. In a return of disease amongst QMAAC for 1918 the largest number (328) had suffered from pulmonary disease; bronchitis, pleurisy, pneumonia; 265 had been treated for laryngitis, tonsillitis, quinsey, gastritis, peritonitis; 188 - colitis; 108 - enteritis; 105 - constipation; 9 - 'hysteria'; 80 - neurasthenia; 88 - heart affections; 122 - scabies; 1,262 - influenza; 617 - debility and anaemia. From *Report on Medical Services provided for QMAAC in France, Dr Sandeman, IWM Army 317/14*. Of WAAC members in France, apart from 9 killed by a bomb at Abbeville on 29/30 May 1918, others had died of pneumonia, influenza, septicoemia, heart failure, drowned, puerperal fever and appendicitis. IWM Army s²⁷/2; 3²⁷/7.
96. Mrs Chalmers Watson was reported in an interview as saying that 'Coloured labour is one of our troubles, and naturally we do not think it wise to develop our efforts in its vicinity...' *Weekly Dispatch*, 'Women March to Armageddon', by Max Pemberton, 2 September 1917. Another paper, *The Woman's Leader*, described the reaction of some of the girls who worked among the Chinese on the docks: 'some of the girls are nervous of the Chinese, and then they are no good at all in the docks, as they have to be shepherded from their offices whenever they want to move. It is a real cruelty to send a girl here if she has that unaccountable racial fear which certain people do suffer from...'. 'We have a girl from a Yorkshire factory, with a mass of untidy fair hair, who is exceptionally good with Chinks'. *The Woman's Leader*, 'WAAC Letters from BEF', M.E. Roach, 13 August, 1920. IWM Army 3²⁸/30.
97. The benefits of introducing women into camps had been especially emphasised, and the resultant improved standards of cleanliness, comfort and economy, for which gratitude was frequently expressed.
98. *Report of Commission of Enquiry*, 20 March 1918, para 8, p. 5, op. cit.
99. 'Origin of rumours', *ibid.*
100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.*
102. *Ibid.*
103. 'Estaminets' were inns, usually small and poor.
104. At the WAAC hostel at Huchenneville, where Winifred Holtby became hostel forewoman in September 1918, Australians who came to the village regularly visited the WAAC recreation hut for

- dancing and socialising with the women. *Winifred Holtby - Letters to a Friend*, Edited by Alice Holtby and Jean McWilliam, 1937, p. 7. See also Letter to the Editor from Winifred Holtby, *Time and Tide*, 16 May 1930, and Winifred Holtby, *The Forest Unit*, Typescript, Winifred Holtby Archive, Hull Central Library.
105. The friend to whom Winifred Holtby addressed her letters in *Letters to a Friend* was the Administrator to the Signals Unit at Huchenneville. She explains that Winifred was sent to her Unit to encourage her to remain in post longer than the average eight weeks that previous administrators had stayed. *Winifred Holtby - Letters to a Friend*, op. cit., p. 5. *ibid*.
 106. F.W.L. to Miss Durham, 25 March 1918, PRO LAB 2/237/ED29209/17.
 107. Lord Derby, WO to G.H. Roberts MP, 23 March 1918, *ibid*.
 108. Brade, W.O. to G.H. Roberts, 29 March 1918, *ibid*.
 109. B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War*, 1979, (Pan) p. 384. [First published as *The Real War, 1914 - 1918*, 1930.]
 110. Barrie Pitt, *1918, the Last Act*, 1984 edition, p. 75. See also John Terraine, *The First World War*, 1984 edition, pp. 162 - 71.
 111. F.W.L. Ministry of Labour to W.H.T. Ottley, WO, 4 April 1918, PRO LAB 2/237/ED29209/17.
 112. *The Times*, 4 April 1918.
 113. V. Markham to Miss Julia Varley, 6 April 1918, LSE Markham 4/13.
 114. *Ibid*. Frances Durham told Sir Reginald Brade that Markham strongly objected to the desire of the WO to omit all reference to the cases of venereal disease; that she believed that this had been specifically included in part of their brief ('...any specific cases of alleged immoral conduct in WAAC') and that if reference to VD were omitted, it would simply cause the public to suspect that something serious was being suppressed, and the report would then have no value in allaying rumours. The Chief Medical Controller of the WAAC, Dr Turnbull, supported this view. F. Durham to Sir Reginald Brade, W.O. 6 April 1918, PRO LAB 2/237/ED29209/17.
 115. *The Times*, 15 April 1918.
 116. *The Times*, 16 April 1918. The reports had been contained in a letter written by Quick to the Secretary of the Purity League in Birmingham, in which the defendant claimed he had received news from a soldier friend in Yorkshire opposite lines occupied by the WAAC. He had described the relations between the two lines as 'appalling' and asked if the League was aware that there was a Government Order in relation to the WAAC, one of whose clauses was that if any WAAC gave birth to a child, and the WAAC was single, the government would pay the girl £15, take custody of the child and keep it. This, wrote Quick, was 'putting a

premium on a horrible vice'. Prosecuting Counsel said that the allegations made were absolutely false; there was no such Government Order, and the WAAC were doing an incalculable service in the war. The difficulty was that only when some one was caught red-handed circulating such rumours that the authorities could strike a blow. In his own defence, Quick said that he had written to Mrs Atlee, the Secretary, in good faith; that he had never mentioned the matter publicly, and was pleased to have the statements contradicted by the Vigilance Committee.

117. *Western Mail*, 17 April 1918. IWM (Printed Records), Press Cuttings, WAAC.
118. Chief Controller QM(W)AAC to Area Controller, QMWAAC, 11 April 1918, IWM Army 3¹⁵/2.
119. The Deputy Chief Controller cancelled a circular letter she had sent out on 9 April 1918, which she explained had been issued owing to an announcement in the paper published by the War Office that the Queen had consented to become Commandant-in-Chief. The Chief Controller had written to thank the Queen, and had received a letter in reply from the Private Secretary to the Queen, which stated that the Queen wanted the Corps to be called QMAAC, as had been arranged with Lord Derby. D.C.C. (Ref. D.C.C./68) undated, IWM 3¹⁴/78, referring to letter from Edward Wallington, PS to HM the Queen, 13 April 1918.
120. War Correspondent for *The Times*, 1 June 1918.
121. Ibid.
122. Winifred Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation* (1936), p. 122.
123. Ibid., p. 123 - 4.
124. Ibid., p. 124.
125. Winifred Holtby, Letter to Editor, *Time and Tide*, op. cit.
126. W. Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation*, op. cit., p. 124.
127. Ibid., p. 125.
128. Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, op. cit., p. 73.
129. Ibid., p. 79. Roberts talked to women in Barrow and Lancaster.
130. Ibid., p. 79. Roberts points out that the number of women who became pregnant and then married could only be calculated by extensive examination of wedding and birth certificates, which has not been done.
131. This emphasises the low pregnancy rate recorded in the WAAC: just 3%.

132. Roberts, op. cit., p. 80.
133. Fischer and Dubois, op. cit., pp. 304 - 5. The book from which they quote is by Helen Zenna Smith. Unfortunately the authors cite no evidence for any of their statements.
134. Holtby, Letter to Editor, *Time and Tide*, op. cit.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. W. Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation*, op. cit., p. 125.

CHAPTER 10

THE WOMEN'S ROYAL AIR FORCE

The first months of the Women's Royal Air Force's existence were notable principally for the troubles which arose over the leadership of the Corps. Together with the Royal Air Force, the WRAF was officially constituted on 1 April 1918.¹ In January General Guy Livingston, Director Air Organisation, asked the Air Council for definite sanction to form a separate women's service, to be designed on lines identical to the WRNS and WAAC.² He also asked that authority be given to appoint a certain number of women officers to carry out preliminary work before the actual operation commenced. The Air Council approved his proposal,³ and on 22 February the Treasury agreed to the establishment of a Women's Air Force Service (WAFS) up to a total of 30,000 women, for duties analogous to those carried out by the WRNS and WAAC for the Navy and Army, subject to certain conditions.⁴ It was agreed that existing members of WRNS and WAAC who had been recruited to RNAS and RFC would be transferred as far as possible to the new service, though women who transferred should keep their old uniforms until they were worn out, with a badge only to distinguish them.⁵

On 23 February the Air Council approved the appointment of Lady Gertrude Crawford⁶ as Chief Superintendent of the new women's corps,⁷ and the War Office agreed to allow Miss Pratt, who was then the Deputy Chief Controller of the WAAC in France, to be appointed to the post of Chief Inspector and Deputy to the Chief Superintendent of the WAFS.⁸ The new corps was to be administered by Godfrey Paine, Air Council

member and the Master General of Personnel for the Air Force, and controlled by W.C. Bersey, the Director of Manning.

On accepting the post, Lady Gertrude resigned from her job as the sole Inspecting Officer of Women's Work in the Shipyard Labour Department of the Admiralty, which she had held since May 1917, and began to work with Colonel Bersey, who was busily preparing the rules and regulations for the WRAF.⁹ On 28 March Air Ministry FS Publication No. 14, *Royal Air Force Constitution and Regulations of the Women's Royal Air Force* was published.¹⁰ In addition to describing the organisation and listing the rules of the WRAF, FS 14 formally authorised the appointments of the first officers. In the circumstances it was ironic; that same day Lady Gertrude Crawford received a letter from General Livingston, informing her that it had been decided that she did not have the necessary experience and qualifications for the type of work entailed as Chief Superintendent of the WRAF. She was given the opportunity of resigning, but told that if she refused, she would be given her notice.¹¹

It could scarcely have been a more inconvenient time; the new organisation faced a difficult task, trying to form a united corps out of a disparate collection of women, amidst the acknowledged chaos and disturbing atmosphere which existed in the new Air Ministry.¹² And in theory at least, from 1 April the WRAF was responsible for the administration of all women employed at Air Stations, and the transfer of women from the WRNS, WAAC and the Women's Legion was projected to take place from 1 May. A press statement announcing the start of recruitment for the WRAF was issued at the beginning of April,¹³ and it was not a particularly welcome development for either the QMAAC or

the WRNS, for it meant more competition for suitable recruits. WRNS Officers were told to notify Director WRNS immediately as to whether or not they wished to transfer to the WRAF, but were assured that officers on Air Stations who did not wish to transfer would, as far as possible, be posted to Naval Stations.¹⁴ In similar vein, the Chief Controller of the WAAC informed her administrators that on no account were they to enforce compulsion on the Workers of the WAAC to re-enrol in the WRAF: such re-enrolment was purely voluntary.¹⁵

Following Livingston's letter, Godfrey Paine also informed Lady Crawford that it had been decided that she must leave her post.¹⁶ He told her he intended to put the matter before the Air Council, and in the circumstances it would be best for everyone if she took a few days leave immediately. In response, Lady Gertrude complained to her chief of the difficulties of her position, which she insisted would persist unless radical changes were made.¹⁷ She told Paine that she had had no real role to play, as her colleague, Colonel Bersey, had carried out all meaningful work himself.¹⁸ Even though she had been positioned in the same office Bersey not only interviewed all prospective candidates for WRAF officer posts, but he answered their letters as well. Many matters connected with the Corps could doubtless be in men's hands but 'the selection, training and posting of woman officers, in whose efficiency the whole welfare and discipline lay, should be entirely under the superintendence of the chief woman officer'.¹⁹ Had Colonel Bersey actually given her any such work to do, Lady Gertrude was confident of her own ability to carry it through.

Her complaints were in vain. Paine explained to an Air Council meeting that Lady Gertrude did not, in his opinion, 'possess the qualities necessary for organising a large body of women, and that it would be preferable to point this out to her and to secure her resignation before a start was made in recruiting'.²⁰ The Council agreed that Lady Gertrude should be informed that in view of the difficulties of the ~~organisation~~ ^{of} the creation of such a new and large force, the Air Council had decided to confirm 'the decision of the MGP that she could not be retained in the appointment'.²¹

Lady Gertrude was puzzled about the true nature of the objections to her leadership of the Corps. She told Frances Stevenson that Bersey had informed her that quite apart from the conclusion reached by the higher authorities (none of whom she knew personally) that 'outside opinion had pronounced her appointment an unfortunate one'.²² General Livingston had told her that her experience among the 'Industrial' had no bearing on her present work, yet, as she also pointed out, Livingston had known before he offered her the appointment that her training had been entirely in Workshops, Factories, Shipyards, Docks and Foundries, and indeed, the women to be employed in the WRAF came from the same classes. Lady Gertrude attempted to gain the attention of the Prime Minister, enclosing a letter for him with the one she sent to Frances Stevenson, apologising for writing on what might appear as a purely personal matter - 'but the heads of Departments realise very little of the ways and means employed by their subordinates'.²³ When nothing came of her efforts, she seems to have resigned herself to the situation and apart from

writing to complain that she had not received her due salary, faded from the scene.²⁴

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The incident attracted the attention of Violet Markham, who remarked on the 'extraordinary situation which is going on with the Penguins' in a letter to an unnamed correspondent, to whom she quoted Lady Gertrude's complaint that women officers were being chosen by men whose 'selection is most unsuitable including ladies with pink cheeks and yellow hair'.²⁵ Katharine Furse²⁶ had sent Lady Gertrude to see Markham, since which time she had 'haunted the door and the telephone'.²⁷ Markham felt sorry for her, but suspected the move by the Air authorities may have been justified, remarking caustically that she did 'not think it has remotely crossed her [Crawford's] imagination that she is not the most suitable woman in England for the work'.²⁸ She found it 'specially pathetic' that Lady Gertrude should dwell on her Trade Union connection and her popularity in Labour circles. Altogether, it was a most perplexing situation, and Markham found it extraordinarily difficult to advise her.

The status of the 'Chief Woman Penguin' was the root of the trouble. Markham wrote to Frances Stevenson and urged that the changes at the Air Ministry afforded a good opportunity for the review of the present unsatisfactory position of the Chief Woman Superintendent.²⁹ All questions relating to discipline, clothing and housing, for example, should be under the management of women, not men, and Markham drew attention to the youthfulness of the Air Service, and what she described as the 'special unsuitability' of control by men in the circumstances.

Markham explained to Stevenson why the organisation of the Penguins was causing anxiety amongst people interested in women's work. The girls who joined the Corps were, of course, under complete control of the service employing them when at work, but it was felt that all questions connected with their recruitment, welfare and discipline in out-of-hours work should be entirely in the hands of responsible women; a principle which had been adopted by the Admiralty with regard to the WRNS. In contrast, Chief Superintendent of Penguins had no executive power. Questions concerning housing and clothing of women, as well as the selection of administrators for the Corps, were dealt with by Air Board Officers. Markham insisted that 'no man in these times of stress should be occupied with matters which could be handled far more efficiently by women'.³⁰

The selection of women administrators by men officers was 'particularly objectionable' and unless the practice was stopped, it would lead to serious trouble. The employment of women with the Air Force raised special difficulties, both moral and industrial. The isolation of the work and the relative youth of the officers in command made the presence of experienced women administrators in positions of real authority essential for good morale and discipline. If the Chief Superintendent was not given proper status and authority the Corps would be involved in great difficulties. The 'gallant lads of the Air Force' had 'a hundred fine qualities' but it was 'obviously unsuitable that they should be given administrative powers over a body of women'.³¹ It was most unfortunate that in this, of all Corps, the Chief Superintendent should have been given a position subordinate either to Director of WRNS or Chief Controller of the WAAC.

Markham's efforts to recruit Frances Stevenson's help were largely unsuccessful, but she found herself drawn further into the affair.³² Invited by Lord Rothermere to discuss the situation of the WRAF with him, Markham had what she described as 'an extraordinary interview' with the Air Ministry staff.³³ On arrival for her appointment she found that Lord Rothermere had left on other business and in his place she saw Major Baird, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Air Ministry, Sir Godfrey Paine, MGP, and Colonel Bersey. Paine had contradicted everything Markham said: aerodromes were not isolated places; Flying Corps men in charge of aerodromes were not young; there was no need to worry about Trade Unions or Labour difficulties and he did not care a hang about Unions. After that unpropitious start, when Markham had decided that there was nothing for her to do 'but bow myself out and put Parliament on their track', Paine had asked her to read their Flying ACI and make suggestions. He told her that Lady Gertrude had been 'hopeless' and asked her to help them find 'a good woman' to replace her. Markham was highly critical of the whole proceeding, which she described as 'quite mad and irresponsible'. She had exchanged 'a few fluent phrases with them about the general corruption, inefficiency and jealousy of Government Departments' and had told them that no doubt they would be just as bad as the others. Paine had protested that he was an honest man; Markham suggested that if that were so, he should be put in a museum in a glass case.³⁴

Markham had consulted with Furse about the WRAF regulations, and she intended putting up various names for consideration for a new woman Chief. It was necessary to 'have someone who by temperament or capacity can make her count with this menagerie and manage it'.³⁵ Sir

Godfrey Paine was 'really rather attractive' - probably excellent at his job - but it made 'one rather desperate to think of a Corps of women in the hands of these people'.³⁶

Both Furse and Markham put forward suggestions for candidates for the head of the WRAF. Furse recommended Rachel Crowdy to Colonel Bersey, observing that apart from her 'rare experience' she was 'very nice looking which does count for something...'.³⁷ Markham also suggested Rachel Crowdy, in addition to a number of other women, including the Honourable Violet Douglas-Pennant,³⁸ Insurance Commissioner for Wales for the National Health Insurance Commission, whom she described as 'a very charming and tactful woman with much sound administrative capacity and experience'. She might be somewhat shy and retiring for this particular post 'but would certainly not make trouble'.³⁹

Miss Durham at the Ministry of Labour was approached by Colonel Bersey,⁴⁰ who sent a list of names of likely candidates for the post of Commandant of the WRAF which included the Hon. Violet Douglas-Pennant, and asked her for any further information about the women, in order that it could be submitted to the Air Council. Durham told Bersey that she considered the strongest candidate was Violet Douglas-Pennant: '...a very able and pleasant woman, and very generally known and liked', with a great deal of varied experience, who had held a very responsible post.⁴¹

As well as making suggestions about a new head, Markham studied the WRAF regulations, FS Publication 14, and wrote to Paine complaining that the position of the head woman WRAF was less satisfactory than in either of the other two corps.⁴² She insisted

that the chief administrator of a woman's corps should have executive authority within her own sphere, and direct access to the responsible heads of her department. She should be able to make known her needs to the official with whom authority rested, without having to go through layers of masculine control. The WRAF would start under an initial disadvantage if the woman in charge had inferior status to Director of WRNS or Chief Commandant WAAC.

In response to her criticisms Colonel Bersey informed the Master General of Personnel that Markham was under some misapprehension regarding the general question of control.⁴³ The WAAC was 'controlled' by the War Office, and the WRNS by the Admiralty. In that same sense the WRAF was 'controlled' by the Air Council; control meaning general administration of the Corps, including provision of accommodation, rations, training, movements, postings, records, official publications. But all questions concerning welfare, inspection, discipline, selection of officers, recruiting, medical boards etc. had been definitely allocated to the women's side of the organisation. Bersey did suggest that the title of the WRAF Chief Woman Officer should be changed from Chief Superintendent to 'Commandant', and that the regulations should be altered to make it clear that the Commandant had direct access to the Air Council. His suggestion was opposed in part by the Director of Manning, Lieutenant Stuart Ebben, who considered that it would be sufficient for the Commandant to have access to the MGP rather than direct access to Air Council, and then only as a 'court of appeal', a sentiment agreed with by Guy Livingston.⁴⁴

Bersey insisted that while they were 'only too ready' to meet Trade Unions in 'friendly consultation' the WRAF was not in any sense an 'Industrial' organisation; enrolment was entirely voluntary and women were enrolled only in substitution for soldiers.⁴⁵ That enrolment in the WRAF was entirely voluntary was open to question. Mary Carlin, one of the women who had accompanied Violet Markham to France on the WAAC Commission, told Markham about an investigation she was carrying out at Yates, where '300 girls had joined the immobile sections of WAAC either because they were told they would have to go if they did not, or because they were unable to obtain work otherwise. On a show of hands only one girl said she would have joined if she could have obtained work without'.⁴⁶ Carlin complained bitterly that after nearly three years of war work 40,000 girls should be discharged by one department, and that though the government was advertising for 30,000 girls, the women were not to be allowed to work unless they signed on in one of the Corps. While that was understandable for the mobile section of the Corps, it seemed absurd to put married women living at home into uniform.

Carlin also objected on the grounds that as soon as the women were put in uniform they would be the subject of gossip. She stressed that she was 'not against the mobile'; what she resented was getting women into the Corps to do industrial work, in the vicinity of their own homes and when they objected to it themselves, and were only driven to it 'by the lash of necessity'. In another letter Carlin told Markham that as a Trades Unionist she felt bound to oppose the move to employ women in Corps, for it would mean that women would be taken outside their organisations, and the rates of pay for some

classes were decidedly less than the unions had obtained for them.⁴⁸ But despite Carlin's resentment, trade union opposition did not prove to be a serious problem to the recruitment of women for the military corps, and there is no evidence that the desire to remove women from the influence of trade unions was a major consideration in determining their development.⁴⁹

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Encouraged by the enthusiastic reports he had received, Godfrey Paine wrote to Violet Douglas-Pennant, and they met for the first time on 25 April.⁵⁰ Paine was to recall that on the occasion of that first interview he had made it plain that the Commandant would be directly responsible to the Master General of Personnel, and have access to him whenever necessary.⁵¹ On 29 April Douglas-Pennant told Paine that she would like to have a month's 'look around' before she gave him her final decision, and they agreed she would take up her duties provisionally on 13 May. On 25 April Lord Rothermere resigned from his post as Secretary of State for Air, and on 27 April Sir William Weir was appointed as the new Secretary of State.⁵² A few days later Frances Stevenson wrote to Weir, enclosing a letter about the WRAF that she had written to Lord Rothermere.⁵³ She had told Rothermere that the Prime Minister had been approached from various sources about the WRAF administration, the main criticism being that the woman in charge was not on the same footing as the Woman Directors of the WAAC and WRNS. Weir replied that on investigation he had discovered that the recently appointed Commandant, Miss Douglas-Pennant, had direct access to the MGP and was quite content with that arrangement. Miss Pennant was to start work almost immediately 'and it is thoroughly

understood that if any changes are found necessary by experience to strengthen her position, they will be made'.⁵⁴

On 13 May Miss Douglas-Pennant took up her new duties at the Hotel Cecil. At this time her department, known as WM3, consisted of Deputy Commandant Miss Pratt; two Assistant-Commandants, Mrs Beatty and Miss Andrew, and three or four probationary officers. As she complained later, she found the office in chaos; no proper organisation established, no register or system for filing letters and most crucially, she found that she could not get information that she needed.⁵⁵ The most urgent problems facing Douglas-Pennant as she took up her appointment were lack of accommodation for both rank and file and officers, and a desperate shortage of suitable recruits to be trained as officers. Paine himself emphasised that accommodation and the shortage of officers were subjects constantly discussed between him and Douglas-Pennant, and stated that he frequently urged her to get more officers to administer the large number of women who were being enrolled in the WRAF.⁵⁶ They were being pressed almost daily by the Government to substitute women for men.⁵⁷ The Air Force was being expanded at a very rapid rate and it was essential that they should get women officers to look after the large number of women required.

On May 2 the Air Council formally agreed that Douglas-Pennant should be appointed Commandant of the WRAF.⁵⁸ General Paine told the Council that he had received the highest testimonials about her from the National Health Insurance Committee and others, but that she herself was anxious not to be definitely appointed until she was certain that she could carry out the work effectively. On the same day Paine wrote to Markham expressing his pleasure that Violet

Douglas-Pennant had agreed to become Commandant, and commenting that they were lucky to get her.⁵⁹ Four months later Douglas-Pennant was sacked.

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The experience of her first month made Douglas-Pennant decide that she would not continue permanently as Commandant. She wrote to Sir Godfrey Paine, telling him that she must decline the appointment. When she started she had

hoped that it would have been possible to help get the WRAF on to a satisfactory footing as quickly and quietly as possible. I had no idea then that there had been serious friction between No. 3 [i.e. Bersey's department, M3] and the women. You will remember that I accepted the appointment provisionally on the clear understanding that I should be responsible to you for the general administration of the WRAF. This, however, was apparently not made clear to others concerned - I found myself in the difficult position of seeming to want to assume responsibilities to which I was not entitled, so I was blocked at every turn. I should like to emphasise that never has been [sic] the slightest friction between Colonel Bersey and myself - nothing could have been nicer to work with and I fully appreciate the difficult position he was put in owing to the fact that my exact responsibilities were not made clear to him (as they were to me) at the outset. General Livingston made the position quite clear to me after you left on Saturday morning, since which I have thought things over, and I feel that I must decline the appointment on the terms offered by him.⁶⁰

Douglas-Pennant told Paine that she could not, with any honesty, remain 'to merely carry out instructions from anyone in No. 3 who happens to be on duty - while at the same time I am "on loan" from the Insurance Commission at a salary which carries with it high Executive and Administrative responsibilities'.⁶¹ The work that General Livingston required from the Commandant 'could well be fulfilled by a subordinate clerk or a well-trained Matron'. Douglas-Pennant assured Paine she did not care tuppence about her own position; she only cared about getting the work done. She believed he would never get the WRAF

on a sound footing unless the Commandant was treated with confidence and given 'due authority' over that organisation - 'She must be able to command the respect of outside critics, as well as satisfy those inside'.

Paine was horrified at the prospect of a second woman head leaving the Corps, and successfully persuaded Douglas-Pennant to reconsider. A few days later she wrote to Paine and told him that she had 'resigned because I thought it was intended that I should, and I never dreamt when General Livingston had explained the situation to me, that you would prefer me having another try'.⁶² She thought he was making a great mistake in asking her to stay on; she did not feel, after what had happened, that she was the right person:

...however, as you are so good to say that you still have confidence in me, I will try to do my best not to disappoint you. Nothing would have induced me to take on this job, except the feeling that one must try to justify one's existence, when all of you are slaving away. It is odious being a woman in War Time.⁶³

Any expectations that things would improve now her status had been clarified were shortlived. At the beginning of July Godfrey Paine complained to Colonel Bersey that he was dissatisfied with the organisation for the administration of the WRAF, and particularly with the unnecessary delay in decision-making.⁶⁴ Admitting that the WRAF had been forced to let the Ministry of Labour select and enrol their women, as there were insufficient WRAF officers for the task, Bersey assured his chief that steps had now been taken whereby it was expected to train several hundred officers over the next few months. Excusing their shortcomings, Bersey pointed out that QMAAC and WRNS

had been going concerns for some time, while for its part the WRAF had not yet been in existence two months.⁶⁶

On the same day Paine complained to Bersey the three most senior women officers working for Douglas-Pennant handed in their resignations. Katherine Andrew, Assistant Commandant, believed that her reports on some forty Air Stations round the country had had no action taken on them, and she could no longer accept the responsibility of knowing about the unsatisfactory state of affairs when she was given no power to remedy the situation.⁶⁶ The Deputy Commandant of the WRAF, Edith Pratt, asked if she could leave immediately pending the ratification of her resignation 'as to remain in the office under these circumstances could only create a difficult situation'.⁶⁷ Pratt had joined the WRAF in March that year, from her post as Deputy Chief Controller (Overseas) of the WAAC. She complained that since she had been working for Douglas-Pennant her share of the work had become increasingly difficult. The new division of duties between M3 and WM3, which had come into effect on 17 June⁶⁸ had meant a considerable amount of new work had devolved on the section, but there had been no provision of extra staff or definite allotment of duties. She had been given no definite instructions as to the scope and responsibilities of her own position, and she insisted that she could not hold a position where she was given no power but was 'liable to be held responsible for a state of things of which I entirely disapprove and am powerless to remedy'.⁶⁹ Later, Pratt told the House of Lords Select Committee that at an interview with Violet Douglas-Pennant a few days after she had resigned, she had been 'indiscriminantly abused' by Douglas-Pennant and that among other

things, Douglas-Pennant had told her she [Pennant] was 'a lady'; that Pratt, Beatty and Miss Andrew were not ladies, and probably had never met a lady before.⁷⁰

Mrs Beatty, the third person to resign, and later accused of being the ringleader in a conspiracy to oust Douglas-Pennant, gave as her reason for leaving that she had grown increasingly unhappy working under Douglas-Pennant. The final straw had come when Douglas-Pennant criticised her for signing her own letters, insisting that she was only a junior and should only sign routine letters.⁷¹ Both Beatty and Pratt had their resignations accepted, were told to carry on working until relieved, but refused, and neither returned to work in the WRAF again.⁷² Katherine Andrew's resignation was not accepted, and reluctantly she stayed at her post until August.⁷³

Whether or not the WRAF officers were justified in their action is impossible to determine at this remove, but what is certain is that their leaving created enormous difficulties for Douglas-Pennant. An incident which may have precipitated the rebelliousness of the WRAF administrative staff was Douglas-Pennant's refusal to approve the permanent appointments of a group of probationary officers, all of whom had been promised senior posts in the WRAF hierarchy. Douglas-Pennant had been told about the five women by Colonel Bersey. She later claimed that she felt very sorry for the awkward position in which Bersey found himself, but insisted that 'in justice to them and to the Service they ought not to be appointed to those posts without experience'.⁷⁴ She described Bersey as having been very disappointed at her decision, but she had stood firm. She wrote to Paine telling him that a definite promise of particular posts had been made, but she

felt she could not recommend them. As she had hoped, Paine supported her action totally, and insisted that the ladies should be informed that they could not be appointed to a post of a higher grade than the one Douglas-Pennant had indicated, though they would be eligible for a higher post if and when they were so recommended.⁷⁵ If they were unwilling to accept the more junior posts they should be informed that their services could not be utilised in the WRAF. Despite Douglas-Pennant's insistence that at least two of the women had been perfectly 'nice about it',⁷⁶ undoubtedly they were all deeply disappointed and felt justified in refusing to accept the lower posts offered.⁷⁷

From the evidence supplied it is difficult to find any reason why Douglas-Pennant should deny the women their promised posts other than that she was determined to prove her authority was superior to Bersey's. The reports on the women in question all praised their work. Her insistence that they were too inexperienced for the posts seems misplaced; she was desperate for officers, and anyway it was almost impossible to have acquired relevant experience except through the training they had been given as probationers. With hindsight, her determination to prevent them being appointed to posts apparently promised by Bersey, can be seen to have brought her more trouble than she could possibly have anticipated.

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The unhappy situation within the WRAF was the subject of speculation and agonizing among members of the other two corps and outsiders alike. In her unofficial role as adviser to the women's services, Violet Markham was quickly drawn in. Having heard Katharine Furse's version of events Markham wrote and asked her to 'suspend

judgement' about the 'Air Board situation' as she had heard a very different side of the story from what Furse retailed.⁷⁸ Douglas-Pennant had dined with Mrs Tennant the previous night and had given her 'the most deplorable accounts of the intrigues in her own office against which she has had to struggle, largely owing to the gross disloyalty of Mrs Beatty who has led the cabal against her'.⁷⁹ Miss Pennant had found 'pure chaos in the office, and of course has stood for honest and efficient administration'. Whether or not Mrs Beatty had aspirations to be Commandant and was disappointed at having another woman put in, Markham could not say, but she had apparently 'set out to make life impossible for Miss Pennant, and Miss Pratt has been led away in the middle of this situation'.

Markham was aware that Furse liked and trusted Mrs Beatty, who had worked with her in the WRNS, but she insisted that the sort of story that Furse had told her about Miss Pennant, as coming through Mrs Beatty, was quite irreconcilable with anything she had ever heard of Miss Pennant's work and character. The Insurance Commission people considered her work admirable, and she was regarded 'as the Socialist member of a High Tory family and to be in reaction against the whole ancestral point of view'. The previous night Markham had dined with someone who had told her that in Wales 'they had found Miss Pennant's name was absolutely one to conjure with in the most radical circles' and it seemed incredible to Markham that a woman who commanded 'the trust and confidence of people of that type should have a mania about her social position'.⁸⁰

Furse continued to support Mrs Beatty and refused to believe she had wanted to undermine Douglas-Pennant.⁸¹ She assured Markham that

the WRAF Commandant could depend on help from the WRNS if she wanted it, but she also expressed extreme anxiety 'because I believe that though she gets on with men she will not get on with women'.²² As *confidante* to both sides Markham was at a loss to understand what had happened. She wrote to Furse:

When a group of women, all of whom according to their past records are nice, high minded, efficient people, come to such a state of loggerheads what is one to think and to believe? I think in these matters we have all to allow a great deal nowadays for the strain and exasperation of the war. Miss Douglas-Pennant coming from a big, well organised office clearly was distracted by the confusion of the Air Ministry. She may have shewn lack of imagination as regards the difficulties of her subordinates. I am simply defeated by the stories about her insistence on her social position. Mr Break, who had worked with her for six years both in London and Cardiff, simply ridiculed any such idea. Mary MacArthur said the same thing emphatically.

I have never been in the middle of a situation which has defeated me more completely than this one. I cannot help feeling this unhappy state of affairs has largely arisen through misconception and misunderstanding which were piled up until their effect was cumulative. Whatever the cause, the consequences are deplorable.²³

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Douglas-Pennant attempted to get her work under control by bringing in outside help to clear the backlog and instil some order. By this time she had lost the support of most of those who had initially welcomed her appointment, and though there was no plot of the kind she herself came to suspect existed, there was undeniably a widespread feeling that something was badly wrong. The impetus behind the move to replace her as head of the WRAF seems to have been sparked off by a genuine concern in a number of quarters about conditions in WRAF camps and the organisational problems confronting the WRAF.

On 20 July the Minister for Labour, G. Roberts, wrote to Lord Weir, complaining about 'the very serious difficulties' arising in

connection with the formation of the WRAF.⁹⁴ At the request of the Air Ministry his Employment Department had undertaken to assist in the recruitment of the WRAF (as they had also for QMAAC and WRNS) and had already collected a number of recruits. But there had been a delay in the enrolment of these recruits, and Roberts considered the matter so serious that he thought Weir might like to look into it personally. He pointed out that the WRAF were still incapable of selecting and enrolling their own women, and were dependent upon their candidates attending QMAAC selection and medical boards. He complained that the Air Ministry still had not issued its revised FS publication, and that in the absence of official guidance great confusion was arising. Finally, he commented on the 'disquieting reports' which were being spread about the slackness of discipline in WRAF camps. In the absence of proper supervision an unsatisfactory condition of affairs might easily arise, which would discredit the Corps in the eyes of the public. The matter concerned Roberts' department, as it would inevitably react unfavourably upon the recruitment not only for the WRAF but for the other women's corps.

In response, Weir told Roberts of his own concern about the WRAF, and of the steps that Paine had already taken to improve matters.⁹⁵ As for the disquieting reports about the camps, undoubtedly the discipline in some WRAF commands was not all that could be desired, but until they got the right type of officers to look after the various units it was quite impossible to tackle the slackness and lack of discipline. Weir told Roberts that he was watching the progress of the Force closely, and could not 'pretend to be at all satisfied with the existing state of things'. The existing

Commandant, Miss Pennant, had only been appointed three months earlier, and it would be unfair to expect marked improvement before now but - 'I think I might rightfully expect the results of her work to begin to show themselves from henceforward if she is to justify her appointment'.⁸⁶

Expressions of discontent at the conditions in women's camps were made in the House of Lords, and Lord Tenterden suggested that an Advisory Committee should be set up to investigate accommodation, health-care and discipline in such camps generally.⁸⁷ The matter was raised yet again by Lord Willoughby Dickinson early in August,⁸⁸ and it was this occasion that prompted Sir Auckland Geddes, the Minister of National Service, to instruct Lady Rhondda to investigate the conditions of women's service.⁸⁹

The first public indication of the depth of feeling against Miss Douglas-Pennant arose in the Commons on 7 August, when the Labour Whip, Tyson Wilson, asked the Under Secretary of State at the Air Ministry whether he was aware of the feeling of dissatisfaction in the force with the present Commandant, and whether in view of that dissatisfaction he would institute a full inquiry into the causes.⁹⁰ In reply, Major Baird assured the House that 'The Air Council have every confidence in this lady's ability and discretion, and they see no need for an inquiry of the nature suggested'.⁹¹ It has never been revealed who was responsible for persuading Tyson Wilson to raise the subject in the Commons, though Douglas-Pennant herself certainly believed that her Assistant Commandant, Mrs Beatty, had figured prominently. Yet a few days later Katharine Furse told Markham that

neither she nor Mrs Beatty knew who had prompted the questions in the House.⁹²

Godfrey Paine grew increasingly concerned and in an effort to retrieve the situation, removed Colonel Bersey from his post as head of M3.⁹³ He reminded Bersey of his earlier warning that unless there was a vast improvement in the organisation of the WRAF he would be compelled to make changes: he was still not satisfied that the WRAF was running as smoothly or as efficiently as it should be. He continued:

I am quite determined that the WRAF is going to be a successful undertaking and under the present regime I am convinced that this will not be obtained, i.e. with you as head of M.2 and the present Commandant as head of WM.3. I am not prepared to experiment with another Commandant at the moment, but I am prepared to see if a great improvement cannot be effected with another officer in charge of M.3.⁹⁴

Paine did not immediately inform Douglas-Pennant of his decision, and three days after he had written to Bersey she told Paine that it would be impossible for her 'to place the work on a satisfactory footing if Colonel Bersey remained in charge of M.3'.⁹⁵ According to her own account, Paine considered the position, and informed her the following day that he had decided to dismiss Colonel Bersey and retain her as Commandant; that a Colonel Powell would take over Bersey's duties, and she was not to resign. Paine had expressed his confidence that under the new conditions the work would proceed satisfactorily, but he did tell Douglas-Pennant that if it did not, either Colonel Powell or she, whichever was at fault, would go.⁹⁶

In mid-August, as a result of a report from Lady Rhondda's women's department about the lack of supervision and want of discipline in the WRAF, the National Service Council of the Ministry

of National Service decided that if the position of the women in the WRAF was as stated, it would be necessary to stop recruiting women for that force in order to prevent recruiting for WRNS and QMAAC being seriously affected by public scandal.⁹⁷ 'W' were instructed to make full investigations, and as a result of their report, Auckland Geddes drafted a letter intended for Lord Weir.⁹⁸ This letter expressed Geddes's anxiety about the future supply of personnel for the RAF and Army and Navy, the difficulty in raising enough men, and the consequent importance of developing the employment of women in the Services. Like Roberts earlier, Geddes urged Weir to investigate the details of the complaint, as he was himself convinced that as things stood they were 'steering for the rocks'. As far as the employment of women was concerned

Frankly, the present arrangements for the WRAF seem to be thoroughly bad. In fact so bad are they that unless they are put right your whole women's recruiting effort will be jeopardised, otherwise we shall be face to face with a state of public opinion which will seriously affect the whole development of the women's corps movement. I will, I am afraid, have to embargo recruiting for the WRAF if things are not improved. I have asked Lady Rhondda, who is head of the women's section here, to see you and discuss the matter in detail.⁹⁹

What was required, Geddes believed, was a complete reorganisation of the WRAF central women's department, with new personnel, and a temporary transfer of local control of WRAF personnel to officers of the WRNS and QMAAC, pending such time as was necessary to allow the reorganised central department to set up an organisation which could cope with the difficulties of the situation.

According to Weir, when he saw Geddes's draft letter, he considered the matter carefully over the weekend of 24 and 25 August, and made the decision to supersede Miss Douglas-Pennant.¹⁰⁰ On Monday

26 August Weir saw Lady Rhondda and Philippa Strachey.¹⁰¹ On the same day Weir saw a copy of Lady Rhondda's *Report on Conditions in Women's Camps*, which praised conditions in both QMAAC and WRNS camps, and roundly attacked the WRAF, complaining of the lack of senior WRAF officers to control women; the large numbers of workers throughout the country who had no women officers in control; and the way that this had led to disorganisation, inefficiency and a lack of discipline.¹⁰² The report was not inaccurate so much as unfair, notably in failing to mention any of Douglas-Pennant's own efforts to recruit officers, and for its misleading comparison between WRNS and WRAF.¹⁰³

At this time Major-General Sir Godfrey Paine was moved from his post and sent to France as Inspector General for the RAF,¹⁰⁴ and Major-General Sefton Brancker¹⁰⁵ succeeded him as Master-General of Personnel. It was thus Brancker rather than the supportive Paine whom Weir instructed to tell Douglas-Pennant that she must leave. There is nothing to suggest that there was anything sinister in this abrupt change of personnel, but it was unfortunate from Douglas-Pennant's viewpoint. If Paine had agreed to carry out Weir's orders, he certainly would have handled the situation more tactfully than did Brancker. Most importantly, he would have reminded Weir that he had already warned Douglas-Pennant that if things had not improved within a month from Powell's taking over, and he felt she was responsible, she would leave. It might only have been a matter of waiting a further two weeks before she was told to go, but that could have been enough to have ensured there was no fuss.

According to Douglas-Pennant, Sefton Brancker told her that she was to leave not because she was inefficient 'because you are either

"very efficient" or "quite efficient", but because you are so grossly unpopular with everybody who has ever come in contact with you. I have to remind you there is a war on, and nobody can do any work while you are about the place'.¹⁰⁶ Brancker told her that Lord Weir had made this decision. She had asked him when he wanted her to go and she claimed he said 'Now. You can go at once - tomorrow'.¹⁰⁷ She told him that she felt it would be fairer to her successor if she cleared things up, and Brancker said she could stay till Saturday. He had then said, 'I am very sorry for you'; Violet said 'Not at all', and she left, refusing to shake his offered hand.

Later, in his own account of this painful occasion, Brancker admitted that he had approached the task of superseding her 'with some misgivings'.¹⁰⁸ He was sorry for her, he said, and he had gone out of his way to be as polite and kind as he could. Ever since, Douglas-Pennant had accused him of being rude, but he could not conceive why, as he had taken particular trouble to be courteous to her. He had told her that he had been such a short time in his new post that he was not in a position to judge whether or not she was efficient. For all that he knew she might be efficient, but during his short experience he had seen a good many people 'and the one point that seemed pretty clear to me was that we were absolutely dependent on the other women's organisations to get our muddle right, and that, rightly or wrongly, these other organisations were not likely to work properly with her'.¹⁰⁹

Whatever the truth of the incident, as far as Douglas-Pennant was concerned it was a shock, and she was hurt and indignant. On reflection, she wrote the following day to Brancker, asking that the

Air Council supply an official letter stating their decision, and their reasons for terminating her post.¹¹⁰ Before she had received a reply she saw Weir himself, and she claimed later that he told her he had authorised her dismissal as he did not think she could obtain the co-operation of certain other women's organisations, though he had assured her that there was nothing which should be taken to reflect in any way on her capacity or efficiency.¹¹¹ Douglas-Pennant complained to Weir that she had been unjustly treated, especially in view of the fact that Paine had so recently insisted *she* remain as he was dismissing Bersey, and only if the work did not proceed satisfactorily should either she or Powell leave.¹¹² She also insisted that any woman who undertook such work should have either the same rights as a soldier to claim a Court Martial, or, if a civilian, be granted a full inquiry, and as one of the National Health Insurance Commissioners, she herself claimed an Inquiry.

Almost immediately after Douglas-Pennant's dismissal Katharine Furse, Lady Rhondda and Mrs Leach were consulted about who should replace her, and they urged that a woman with service experience be appointed. A few days later Helen Gwynne- Vaughan was brought over from France, and appointed as the new WRAF Commandant.¹¹³ Whether as a result of reaping the benefits of Douglas-Pennant's efforts - as General Paine believed¹¹⁴ - or because Gwynne-Vaughan was more able, or, most likely, because the war came to an end, there was a notable reduction in complaints about the WRAF. Despite her initial desire to have remained in France with QMAAC, Gwynne-Vaughan enjoyed her period in the WRAF. She got on splendidly with Sefton Brancker, and the two of them have been credited with inspiring a 'breakthrough in work-

relations between men and women', by abolishing the necessity for women to function through men, streamlining of administration, and generally 'liberating women from a tiresome dependency'.¹¹⁵

Sadly, for Douglas-Pennant the matter was far from resolved and she became obsessed with the idea of - as she saw it - clearing her name, to which end she toiled unceasingly, with the help of stalwart supporters, for the rest of her life. The affair provoked acrimonious debates in both Houses of Parliament, government publication of a voluminous correspondence,¹¹⁶ and two official enquiries: a confidential investigation conducted by Cecil Harmsworth for the Prime Minister,¹¹⁷ and a Select Committee of Enquiry set up by the House of Lords.¹¹⁸ Winston Churchill, who had replaced Weir as Secretary of State for Air,¹¹⁹ objected to Douglas-Pennant's demands for a public enquiry on two grounds. First, he saw no 'reason why a lady influentially connected should be given a right to an enquiry upon the subject of supersession which is denied to officers of every rank in the service'.¹²⁰ Secondly, he insisted that an enquiry which would sit in judgement upon the exercise of Weir's discretion could not be permitted.¹²¹ Churchill eventually conceded that if Douglas-Pennant made out convincing charges of corruption and malice against named individuals whom she held responsible for her suspension, an enquiry might be granted.¹²²

Douglas-Pennant's efforts to provide such allegations were turned down as insufficient to justify public inquiry at the State's expense,¹²³ but they formed the basis of her accusations in her 'Statement of Case' for the House of Lords Enquiry.¹²⁴ The House of Lords Select Committee published its Report after seventeen gruelling

days of hearing witnesses, and exonerated everyone whom Douglas-Pennant had accused of trying to bring about her resignation or dismissal, and ruled that Lord Weir had been free from 'improper influences'.¹²⁵ *The Times* described the Report as a 'crushing document', humiliating to Douglas-Pennant, but she fought on undeterred.¹²⁶ She wrote a book which recorded the affair in minute detail,¹²⁷ and she became a *cause célèbre* among those who regarded the case as a battle for 'clean' public service; it was sometimes described as the 'English Dreyfus Affair'.¹²⁸

Among the more serious charges made by Douglas-Pennant were her accusations that immorality was rife at Hurst Park, the Motor Training Centre employing members of both WRAF and RAF; that Colonel Bersey and General Livingston desired that it should continue, and together with Mrs Beatty and other officers at Hurst Park feared Douglas-Pennant intended to throw a 'search-light' on these misgivings, and wanted her dismissed to prevent her taking action.¹²⁹ She had also accused Colonel Janson, the Officer Commanding the depot, of having allowed immoral relations between men and women, and himself of having lived in an immoral relationship with one of the WRAF technical deputy Superintendents, Miss Gwenda Glubb.¹³⁰ The accusations against Glubb and Janson caused a scandal during the Select Committee Enquiry because Glubb's Counsel called on a doctor to give evidence of his client's virginity. Headlines in the press of 'Cruel and Wicked Charges' and 'Girl's Honour at Stake'¹³¹ alienated many who had till then felt some sympathy for the manner in which Douglas-Pennant had been dismissed. To Katharine Furse the case of Miss Glubb illustrated how little sense Douglas-Pennant had of her position as WRAF

Commandant: 'as one's whole endeavour would have been to protect one's people in the public eye, whatever one might have done with them in the Services'.¹³²

Over the years the focus of Douglas-Pennant's grievance altered, and ultimately settled on the belief that the real cause of her dismissal had been the charge of criminal immorality between her and women of the Air Force.¹³³ Mrs Beatty became the chief suspect of having made allegations of lesbianism against Douglas-Pennant, which Lady Rhondda was suspected of having passed on to both Auckland Geddes and Weir. The dubious 'evidence' gathered by the Douglas-Pennant Committee was rejected by Inskip, Attorney General at the time,¹³⁴ and her campaign continued unresolved. The open files in the Public Record Office end in 1937, with a letter from Douglas-Pennant's solicitors to the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, claiming that sworn statements had been obtained from witnesses prepared to testify in public 'to the effect that Miss Douglas-Pennant was secretly accused by her traducers of sexual perversion - in other words of the foul offence of Lesbianism'.¹³⁵

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There have been various interpretations of the Douglas-Pennant affair. Collier, Brancker's biographer, considers that part of the reason for Douglas-Pennant's troubles was that she did not protest strongly enough; that

For all her success in carving out a career for herself Miss Douglas-Pennant could not escape the effects of her upbringing. She was a sixth daughter. Beneath the trappings of the capable committee-woman dwelt the soul of a lady bred in the tradition that younger daughters of large families abstained from making fusses - and especially from fusses likely to embarrass their own menfolk.¹³⁶

The minor obstructionism Douglas-Pennant met from petty officials in the Air Ministry in her first weeks were, according to Collier, simply part of the normal give-and-take of service life rather than signs of a deliberate conspiracy to oust her, though he suggests that some of the incidents might have been caused by some kind of 'unconscious impulse of hostility to feminine intervention'.¹³⁷

Gwynne-Vaughan's biographer, Izzard, speculates that Douglas-Pennant may have been suffering from mental instability of some kind, possibly latent in her when she took over as Commandant, and that the transition to unfamiliar working conditions, with the attendant frustrations and discourtesy, precipitated a mental breakdown.¹³⁸ Douglas-Pennant's supposed inability to make decisions was regarded by some as an indication of such an affliction, as was her apparent paranoia. If this was the case - and her obsession with her dismissal could be seen as another symptom - the condition was never diagnosed, nor the suspicions of senior medical staff at the Air Ministry made public, and, as Izzard points out, neither Douglas-Pennant or her 'numerous and well-connected relations would accept such a charge'.¹³⁹ Katharine Furse certainly suspected Douglas-Pennant of schizophrenia. At the height of the troubles she wrote to Violet Markham, complaining that she did not

honestly think that Miss Douglas-Pennant is conscious of what she is doing with all of us. I think the side you describe is probably the real one and that the side we see is quite contrary to her own aspirations. In fact I believe she's one of the few human beings who have two personalities and that she switches them on and off - perhaps unconsciously - according to the circumstances.¹⁴⁰

It is impossible to make a final judgement from the evidence available, for no single factor was responsible for Douglas-Pennant's

dismissal. It was, rather, an amalgam of a number of elements which worked together to make her tenure unsuccessful. These elements may be divided into those for which the blame lies clearly with the Air Ministry, those which were contributed by other women, and those for which Douglas-Pennant herself was responsible. The single most important factor was the bad judgement displayed by the Air Ministry as to how best the new corps should be organised; notably, the inadequate status bestowed on the head of the Women's corps, though the cloudy division of responsibilities between M3 and WM3 did not help.

As for women, the effect of the resignations of Douglas-Pennant's senior officers created immediate practical difficulties, and were regarded with disapproval by Godfrey Paine, for example, who told the Select Committee that the action of the women officers who resigned was 'a form of small mutiny. It would be called a mutiny in the services...Had they been soldiers or sailors they would have been court-martialed about it; there is no doubt about that'.¹⁴¹ The other women heads may have felt some resentment at losing members to the new corps, and allowed this to influence their response to Douglas-Pennant's difficulties, but this is difficult to prove. Izzard suggests that the small group of professional women prominent in government and service circles of the period were jealous of their hard-won status, and 'disliked and resented society women, such as Lady Londonderry, who by reason of their wealth and position took such a prominent part in patriotic work...To Dame Katharine and her friends, Violet Douglas-Pennant came from a suspect stable. They regarded her with suspicion, as unlikely to prove a 'worker'.¹⁴²

Lady Rhondda's report played a crucial part in influencing Weir's decision, but Douglas-Pennant herself must take her share of the blame. There were incidents she mishandled and misinterpreted, and if the stories circulated can be believed, at the least she had an untactful way of allowing her social background to obtrude; at the worst, she was an out-and-out snob.

The opinion of Dr Letitia Fairfield,¹⁴³ Medical Director of the WRAF in 1918, as a contemporary witness, offers a useful, if subjective view. In correspondence about the Douglas-Pennant case, David Mitchell told her that he 'inclined to the view she [Douglas-Pennant] was more sinned against than sinning'.¹⁴⁴ Fairfield insisted that the reverse was true, and later was highly critical of a draft chapter Mitchell sent her on the Douglas-Pennant affair, describing it as a 'knockout blow', a 'cruel travesty of the facts and such a wantonly malignant attack on my comrades'.¹⁴⁵ She described Douglas-Pennant as 'so ignorant of major administration, that she thought this meant that she should attend to *every item herself*, of course an impossible task. She could not realise that the documents only meant she should *delegate*. Naturally she did not know how to begin - and was paralysed into doing nothing'. Fairfield insisted that Douglas-Pennant had not been the subject of malicious gossip at the time of her dismissal, nobody had laughed at her 'maidenly standards', and the supposed rumours were 'the product of her diseased imagination'. On reflection, what was amazing was the absence of personal attacks on Miss Pennant, considering how they had 'all suffered from her vagaries and inability to get on with her job'. Fairfield vouched for the stories of tantrums and snobbery; she had seen them herself. Twice,

speaking to her alone, Douglas-Pennant had 'raved about Dame Katherine Furse as "not even a lady" and unworthy to speak to VIPs about Miss Douglas-Pennant, who was. It was definitely psychotic'. Fairfield, like everyone else in uniform, was distressed

by the disgusting flood of vilification which Miss Douglas-Pennant and her friends let loose on the unfortunate service in which we had failed. We could not believe our ears - the nastiest stories were traced to Miss Douglas-Pennant. The horrible thing was that she had masses of influential friends - the unfortunate service women had no-one to defend them. Churchill did his best but he had of course no personal knowledge...¹⁴⁶

The major issue that the whole affair raises is the question of leadership in the women's corps. Douglas-Pennant had been chosen because she was highly recommended by respected women whose opinions had been sought, and because she had had valuable experience in one of the more senior public administrative posts then available to women.¹⁴⁷ She had replaced Lady Gertrude Crawford, against whom the principal objection seems to have been the quality of her command, though in these early days of the women's military corps the qualities needed by a successful female leader had scarcely been identified. A definition of the characteristics of both successful and unsuccessful (male) leaders within military organisations have been offered by Norman Dixon:

...specific instances of incompetence and the possession of authoritarian traits should be related. The least competent should have a personality which manifests profound disturbance of the ego, rigidity, dogmatism and fear-of-failure motivation. conversely, the striking characteristics of highly competent commanders should be their absence of authoritarian psychopathology, enormous self-confidence and general robustness of the ego.¹⁴⁸

Furse, Gwynne-Vaughan, Burleigh Leach and Chalmers Watson all had self-confidence and 'robust egos'. They were sure about what they

wanted, even if they may have experienced difficulties in achieving it sometimes. No doubt Douglas-Pennant was confident in some areas, but she certainly seems to have been motivated by a 'fear-of-failure', illustrated, for example, by the manner in which she insisted on first taking the job only on a temporary basis in case she failed. Neither Furse nor Gwynne-Vaughan would have allowed such a consideration to influence their commitment.

In these years, before their status in the women's corps was firmly established, even the physical appearance of the women may have played an important role in determining the respect with which they were held, by both men and women. Gwynne-Vaughan and Furse were both large women with a tough - even masculine - appearance. Furse, who in her own words had 'no so-called sex appeal', used to enjoy playing a game when walking in the street, of trying to catch men's eyes: not a game she recommended to women attractive to men.¹⁴⁸ Of the consequences of her game, she observed that 'English Clubmen' look intently in front, while 'workmen, messengers, postmen and the more simple men one meets will usually catch one's eye and show that they have no fear of being accosted'.¹⁴⁹ This anonymous challenging of men indicates a useful aggressiveness; Furse was, however, perfectly respectful of the men she worked with, and her letters provide evidence of a warm and tolerant personality, full of enthusiasm and determination.

Gwynne-Vaughan's biographer describes her subject as 'a woman pugnacious by nature, accustomed to hold her own, and more than her own, with men'; she had a certain 'bold slanginess not uncommon among emancipated women'; she smoked, argued, swore, and 'had a sublime

unawareness of other points of view'.¹⁵⁰ According to Izzard, Gwynne-Vaughan was critical of men who didn't actually fight: 'Men content to remain at the rear must indeed be base, hardly worth to be called men', and her manner to them was 'one of brusque impatience'.¹⁵¹ Violet Markham complained of Gwynne-Vaughan that she disapproved of friendships among the women in her Corps, and trampled 'ruthlessly on all personal relationships of life. Her one idea is to have an efficient military machine and to treat the women like men'.¹⁵² A corrective to this view is provided by Furse, who visited Gwynne-Vaughan in France in August 1918, and told Markham that she had 'softened in a wonderful way and her officers seem to be fond of her'.¹⁵³ Furse was impressed by Gwynne-Vaughan's achievements with the QMAAC, and applauded her 'great energy and great aspirations for women and great courage'.¹⁵⁴ Air Vice-Marshal Sir John W. Cordingley, who had been a young Staff Officer in the Personnel Department of the Air Ministry when Gwynne-Vaughan had been WRAF Commandant, is also approving. He writes of her 'exceedingly difficult task since the WRAF and its control was then the subject of a great amount of criticism, political controversy in many circles, Civilian, Political and Service', and that 'we - speaking as a then middle ranking officer - were highly impressed by Dame Helen's clarity of expression and outlook and quiet efficiency with which she tackled the task and successfully tidied it up'.¹⁵⁵

Mrs Burleigh Leach, the Chief Controller of QMAAC, achieved a fine balance between being too 'mannish' or too feminine. She was described in one newspaper soon after she took over from Mrs Chalmers Watson as:

a tall, fair, more than good-looking, straight-limbed lean-built *soldier* in skirts. This woman...was born to be a soldier as certainly as any man whoever wore khaki. Indeed, she is wife of a colonel and daughter of a colonel, and one imagines she must have played with a box of soldiers when other little girls were playing with dolls.¹⁵⁶

The article continues coyly that the fairies had endowed Mrs Burleigh Leach 'with the big qualities of both boy and girl' but she was not a scrap 'mannish' and spoke in 'feminine phrases'.

No-one suggests Douglas-Pennant had a soldierly bearing or 'mannish' appearance. Dr Fairfield described her as a 'strikingly beautiful woman with velvety eyes and great charm of manner'.¹⁵⁷

Another contemporary observer, Mairi Chisholm, saw her as 'gentle and sweet...a typical spinster of that era; with an old maidish outlook. Obviously not suited to lead the new world'.¹⁵⁸ Such characteristics are hardly appropriate for the head of a women's military organisation, and particularly at a time when what was needed were forceful, tough-skinned women, who were undisturbed by the equivocal attitudes that many felt towards their novel role.

Sir William Weir's view of why he had dismissed Douglas-Pennant remained constant. When, in 1931, the Attorney General, Sir William Jowitt, told Weir that Miss Douglas-Pennant would like to see him, Weir replied that he would have nothing to tell her which had not been said publicly already: 'Once again, put in the simplest words, she was relieved of her duties because the show she was running was not going well enough. The whole trouble is that Miss Pennant appears unable to believe this and I cannot make her do so'.¹⁵⁹

David Mitchell has suggested that the Douglas-Pennant case might be regarded as 'an important landmark in the formation of women's

services'.¹⁶⁰ In correspondence with Mairi Chisholm¹⁶¹, who had been a WRAF officer at Hurst Park, he speculated -

...that the clash of opinion about how they should be run - between Miss Douglas-Pennant on the one hand and Sefton Brancker, Dame Gwynne-Vaughan and Dame Katharine Furse on the other - represented a genuine clash between 19th and 20th century ideas between the sexes? Miss Douglas-Pennant seems to me to have stood for pre-suffragette conceptions, and though no doubt very able and upright, to have been doomed to defeat. The mystery is why she was chosen in the first place...¹⁶²

The attributes of leadership are most obvious when they are absent. In the words of Mairi Chisholm, Douglas-Pennant was

a charming person to talk to, but had not the quality of leadership so essential to a woman at that period, when women were only just coming to the fore. It was an especial form of leadership - not Victorian femininity, not aggressive anti-male, but an aptitude for co-operating with men, for common sense, for administrative ability, and for a forward looking aspect on the relationship between male and female. I would say Miss Douglas-Pennant was essentially Victorian and had too little potential.¹⁶³

Wherever the blame finally rests in the Douglas-Pennant case, what is beyond dispute is that she did not fit into the informal women's network - the 'old girl' network - which almost from the beginning of the war had operated to allow women to influence both policy and decisions in certain areas.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 10 [Pages 292 to 328]

1. The Royal Flying Corps had been established in 1912, with both an army and naval wing. The corps was an ancilliary to the existing defence services; there was no central policy for air at that time. The Royal Naval Air Service was developed when Churchill took over the naval wing of the RFC in September 1914. Problems created by the competition between the two branches prompted Asquith to set up the Air Board to provide an instrument for cooperation. This was established in May 1916, with two naval and two army representatives, and it met throughout the next year. German air raids on London during the summer of 1917 did a lot of damage, and in July a sub-committee was set up by the War Cabinet, chaired by General Smuts, to examine both defence arrangements against air raids and the general organisation and direction of aerial warfare. The Committee's Report recommended the immediate institution of an Air Ministry, with an Air Staff to administer all matters connected with aerial warfare, which would be responsible for organising the amalgamation of the RNAS and RFC into one body. This was eventually agreed to by the War Cabinet, and the intention of establishing an Air Ministry was announced in the House of Commons on 16 October, 1917. The Bill got its first reading on 8 November, passed through Parliament and received Royal Assent on 29 November 1917. Formal fusion into a single new service, the Royal Air Force, took place on 1 April 1918.
2. Guy Livingston, Director Air Organisation to MGP, Minute 1, 28 January 1918, PRO AIR 2/94/CW5788. It was called the Women's Air Force Service (WAFS) until early in March 1918, when the title 'Women's Royal Air Force' was approved by the Air Council. Air Council, 16th Meeting, 5 March 1918, PRO AIR 6/12.
3. It was made subject to Treasury consent. W. Robinson to MGP, Minute 3, 29 January 1918, *ibid*.
4. Treasury to Secretary, 22 February 1918, *ibid*. This authority took effect from 22 February 1918. The Ministry of National Service also agreed to the formation of a WAF - see Corsellis, 23 February 1918, *ibid*.
5. At this time it was agreed that recruitment would be arranged through the MNS. Extract from Minutes of 15th Meeting of Air Council, 1 March 1918, PRO AIR 2/11890. However, on 19 March the Treasury approved the recruitment of women for the WRAF by the Employment Department of Ministry of Labour. T.L. Heath to Sec., Ministry of Labour, 19 March 1918, PRO LAB 2/238/ED29424.
6. See Appendix VII for biographical notes.
7. H. McAnally, Air Council to Lady Gertrude Crawford, 23 February 1918, PRO AIR 2/11890.
8. H. McAnnally, Air Council to Sec., WO; 2B.B. Cubitt, WO to Air Council, 28 February 1918, PRO AIR 2/94/CW5788.

9. Gertrude Crawford to Miss F. Stevenson, 12 April 1918, HLRO LG Papers F/87/16/1. Crawford criticised Bersey for not informing her of any arrangements or plans, and spending most of his time preparing FS Publication No. 14.
10. IWM WRAF 1/113.
11. Gertrude Crawford to Sir Godfrey Paine, 2 April 1918, HLRO LG Papers, F/18/16/1.
12. According to David Mitchell, the Air Ministry at this time was the 'scene of bitter interservice rivalry' which involved women as much as men. Mitchell, *Women on the Warpath*, op. cit., p. 229. The biographer of Sefton Brancker quotes David Henderson as asking that he should be relieved of his appointment as Vice-President of the Air Council, as he 'earnestly desired to escape from the atmosphere of intrigue and falsehood' which had enveloped the Hotel Cecil in the past months'. Basil Collier, *Heavenly Adventurer - Sefton Brancker and the Dawn of British Aviation* (1959) p. 83.
13. *The Times*, 2 April 1918.
14. Emergency Acquaint No. 3, K. Furse, 9 April 1918. IWM WRNS 5'/10. Acquaints were weekly instructions issued to officers.
15. Memo from Chief Controller WAAC, April 1918, IWM Army 3'¹⁵/16.
16. Godfrey Paine to Lady Gertrude Crawford, 2 April 1918, PRO AIR 2/11890.
17. Gertrude Crawford to Godfrey Paine, 2 April 1918, HLRO LG Papers, F87/16/1.
18. Lady Gertrude Crawford told Miss Stevenson that Bersey was the only man she had seen in the Air Ministry, and that he was 'a very different man to the Colonel Bersey I subsequently saw with his Chief'. Crawford to Stevenson, 12 April 1918, op. cit.
19. Ibid.
20. 23rd Meeting of Air Council, Item II, 4 April 1918, PRO AIR 11890 and PRO AIR 6/12.
21. Ibid. Sir Henry Norman, a member of the Air Council, reported that he had also heard an account of the unsuitability of Lady Gertrude for the post.
22. Crawford to Stevenson, 12 April 1918, op. cit.
23. Ibid.
24. Crawford to Air Ministry, 6 May 1918, PRO AIR 2/11890.
25. Violet Markham to unnamed correspondent (probably Lord Milner), 4 April 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.

26. Furse was aware of, and sympathetic to, the difficulties which faced the new head of the WRAF; as did Violet Markham, Furse believed that whoever was in charge should have definite status, and power to make decisions without referral to men.
27. Markham to unnamed correspondent, 4 April 1918, op cit.
28. Ibid. Markham offered no reason for holding this view.
29. Violet Markham to Miss Stevenson, 4 April 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Stevenson reported that she had already had complaints about the WRAF, and had got in touch with Rothermere. F. Stevenson to Violet Markham, 6 April 1918, LSE Markham 4/16. In fact, Stevenson had not yet written to Rothermere; she eventually forwarded to Sir William Weir [after the latter replaced Rothermere as Secretary of State for Air] a letter she had intended to send to Rothermere, explaining that she had not sent it because Rothermere had been ill. F.L. Stevenson to Sir William Weir, 3 May 1918, HLRO LG Papers, F87/16/2.
33. Violet Markham to unnamed correspondent, 8 April 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. K. Furse to Colonel Bersey, 8 April 1918, PRO AIR 2/11890. Rachel Crowdy was sister to Furse's own deputy. She had gone to France with the first unit of VADs in October 1914, and had become Principal Commandant of VADs when Furse returned to England in January 1915.
38. See Appendix VII for biographical notes about Violet Douglas-Pennant.
39. V. Markham to Sir Godfrey Paine, 9 April 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.
40. Bersey to Durham, M of L, 15 April 1918, PRO Air 2/11890.
41. Durham to Bersey, 16 April 1918, ibid.
42. Markham to Paine, 9 April 1918, op. cit.
43. W.C. Bersey, Lt. Col., M3 to MGP, 11 April 1918, PRO Air 2/94/CW4382. Despite objections to Markham's criticism, it was recognised that FS 14 needed rewriting, and a new version was begun, but it was not published until November 1918. This delay

created difficulties in the general organisation of the Corps, and personally for Douglas-Pennant, as it meant that the title of the woman head of the WRAF still appeared officially as Chief Superintendent rather than Commandant.

44. L. Stuart Ebben, Director of Manning to DMGP, Minute 2, 11 April 1918; Guy Livingston to MGP, Minute 3, 12 April 1918, PRO Air 2/94/CW4382.
45. Bersey to MGP, Minutes, 11 April 1918, op. cit.
46. Mary Carlin (Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union of GB and Ireland) to Violet Markham, 10 April 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.
47. Ibid.
48. Mary Carlin to V. Markham, 16 April 1918, ibid.
49. Deborah Thom writes that the unions took the question of unionisation of women in the services to the Women's Trade Union Advisory Committee (WTUAC), and that the WO representative said he 'had no objection to members of the Corps joining a trade union provided they do not hold meetings in working hours'. D. Thom, *Ideology of Women's Work*, op. cit., p. 104 and Footnote 51, Ref. MUN 5/52/78 Minutes WTUAC, IWM Army 2, 3 January 1918. Thom comments that it was 'remarkable' that the matter was 'discussed at all for a set of women who, being in uniform, could have been expected to abandon demands for civil rights along with civilian dress', and that the fact that it was initially conceded 'demonstrates how gender confused issues since trade union negotiating rights were only conceded to combatants at the point of mutiny'. But the women's corps in this case was the Forage Corps; though it was under the Quartermaster-General, this Corps was never a part of the QMAAC. (See Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army* op. cit., p. 42.) The Adjutant General would never have considered allowing members of the QMAAC to join a union.
50. *The Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Women's Royal Air Force: Inquiry on Miss Violet Douglas-Pennant*, 4 December 1919, HMSO, p. xxxi, para 5. IWM WRAF 2/66. The Select Committee Report contained 2 Appendices, Proceedings, of the Committee and Minutes of Evidence. It is referred to in future as *Select Committee Report, V.D.P.*, 1919.
51. *Select Committee Report, V.D.P.*, 1919, Minutes of Evidence (Paine), p. 141.
52. Sir William Weir was raised to a peerage soon after his appointment, as Lord Weir of Eastwood. According to Weir's biographer, King George had not wanted Weir to become a peer, but if he was to be appointed Minister he had to be. Weir appointed his Parliamentary Private Secretary, J.L. Baird (later Lord Stonehaven of Urie, 1974 - 1941) to represent him in the Commons. W. Reader, *Architect of Air Power*, pp. 68 - 9.

53. F.L. Stevenson to Sir William Weir, 4 May 1918, HLRO LG Papers F/87/16/2.
54. William Weir to Miss F.L. Stevenson, 6 May 1918, *ibid.*
55. *Select Committee Report, V.D.P., 1919 Minutes of Evidence, (Violet Douglas-Pennant) p. 30.*
56. *Select Committee Report, V.D.P., 1919, Minutes of Evidence, (Paine) p. 144.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. 25th Meeting Air Council, Item VIII, 2 May 1918, PRO Air 6/12. The Minutes stated that the NHI Committee had 'lent' the services of Miss Douglas-Pennant to the WRAF.
59. G. Paine to V. Markham, 2 May 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.
60. *Select Committee Report, V.D.P., 1919, Violet Douglas-Pennant to Paine, 11 June 1918, Appendix 7, p. 402. According to Miss Pratt, Deputy Commandant of the WRAF, Douglas-Pennant offered her resignation that June in order to 'have something in writing' against General Livingston. Douglas-Pennant told Pratt about an interview she had had with Livingston, at which he had appeared to think she was occupying a position previously occupied by her predecessor, which had greatly annoyed her. Douglas-Pennant assured Pratt that there was no risk of her resignation being accepted, and even if she went away briefly she would be sure to be brought back. Select Committee Report, V.D.P. 1919, Minutes of Evidence (Pratt) p. 258.*
61. *Select Committee Report V.D.P. 1919, V. Douglas-Pennant to Paine, 11 June 1918, appendix 7, p. 402.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*
64. MGP to Bersey, 1 July 1918, PRO Air 2/11895.
65. This was incorrect. The WRAF came into existence officially on 1 April 1918 - three months earlier - and it had had an unofficial existence for at least six weeks before that.
66. White Paper, Cmd. 182, May 1919, *Correspondence relating to the termination of the appointment of the Hon. Violet Douglas-Pennant as Commandant of the Women's Royal Air Force. Referred to as Cmd. 182/1919. IWM WRAF 2/67.*
67. White Paper, Cmd 254, July 1919, *Further Correspondence - Supplemental to Cmd. 182, Item 49. Referred to as Cmd. 254/1919.*

68. Shortly before she first handed in her notice Douglas-Pennant had drawn up a plan with Colonel Bersey to reallocate responsibility within M3 and WM3.
69. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, p. 257.
70. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, (Pratt) pp. 264 - 9.
71. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, (Beatty) p. 300.
72. Cmd. 254/1919, Items 8 - 10 (Beatty); Cmd 254/1919, Items 48 - 53 (Pratt).
73. Cmd 182/119, Items 1 - 12 (Andrew).
74. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, (Douglas-Pennant) p. 41.
75. V. Douglas-Pennant to MGP, Memo 1, 1 July 1918, PRO Air 2/11896; MGP to Douglas-Pennant, Memo 2, 1 July 1918, *ibid.* (Printed in Cmd 254/1919).
76. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, p. 41.
77. One of the probationary officers, Mrs Margaret Livingston Parry, was the sister of General Livingston. Douglas-Pennant may have suspected Livingston of using his position to get her the post. The report by the officer in charge of training at the Probationary Officers' Training Centre described Mrs Livingston-Parry as 'Keen, very thorough, tactful - capable of filling a responsible position'. Cmd 254/1919, No. 39.
78. Markham to Furse, 3 July 1918, LSE Markham 4/16. Furse had been *confidante* of some of the women concerned, such as Pratt and Beatty, and shared their anxieties about Douglas-Pennant's leadership.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*
81. Furse to Markham, 6 July 1918, *ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. Markham to Furse, 9 July 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.
84. G.H. Roberts to Lord Weir, 20 July 1918, PRO Air 2/11897; *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, p. 404.
85. Weir to Roberts, 31 July 1918, *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, Appendix 13, pp. 405 - 6. Paine told Weir that steps had been taken to provide WRAF officers who would carry out selection and enrolment.
86. Weir was later accused of having been heavily influenced by Geddes and Lady Rhondda in his decision to remove Douglas-

Pennant. This example of his concern suggests that they simply confirmed his own suspicions that he had to take drastic action.

87. 25 July, 1918, 30 H.L. Deb 5s, Cols. 1201 - 5. Tenderden had received information from Mrs Alex Gilmour, who had experience of camps both in France and Britain. He excluded both WAAC camps and munitions camps from his criticism; Munitions Camps, because they were 'under a very ably conducted welfare scheme supervised by Dr Collis'; WAAC camps because the WAAC had a proper administration, and very high standard of efficiency in things like housing, recreation and discipline.
88. Philip Combray, MNS, sent C. Harmsworth a copy of Lady Rhondda's report, and told him that it had arisen out of a question addressed by Sir Willoughby Dickinson to Bonar Law on 5 August 1918. LG/HLRO F/87/15/19.
89. A. Geddes to W. Weir, 26 August 1918, Cmd. 254/19, Item 72.
90. 7 August 1918, 109 H.C. Deb 5s, Cols 1386-7.
91. Ibid.
92. Furse to Markham, 12 August 1918, LSE Markham 4/6. At the Select Committee Enquiry held the following year, Mrs Beatty again denied that she had either talked or written to Tyson Wilson. *Select Committee Report V.D-P.*, 1919, pp. 300, 305, 306. Inexplicably, neither side called Tyson Wilson to give evidence at the Enquiry. In her book *Under the Searchlight*, her own version of events, Douglas-Pennant reported that Mr Tyson was at the enquiry, but for some reason she did not know was never called to the stand. There was talk of letters he had sent to the Air Ministry, which he had received from people complaining of what happened at the WRAF, but no letters were ever produced, and from Air Ministry minutes it seems they had no record of such letters being received.
93. Paine to Bersey, 13 August 1918, PRO Air 2/11898.
94. Ibid.
95. Douglas-Pennant to Weir, 2 September 1918, Cmd. 182/1919, Item 15.
96. Ibid.
97. Auckland Geddes to W. Churchill, 12 March 1919, PRO Air 2/11898.
98. Auckland Geddes to Weir, 19 August 1918, *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, para 135, pp. xlvii - xlviii. There is no record of Weir having received this letter, but Geddes certainly spoke to Major Baird and showed him a draft of the letter. Weir himself saw a letter which he later described as very similar, if not the same, as the draft copy which is on the files.

99. Ibid. At the Enquiry Geddes claimed that by August 1918 they had practically reached the end of the supply of young fit recruits, and the increased employment of women was becoming a matter of extreme urgency. They were faced with a women's organisation which was not working well, and in which it seemed possible that serious scandal might arise. Geddes said that in war time there was no time to stop and argue about things; they just had to get things done.
100. Weir to Geddes, 26 August 1918, *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, para 140, p. xlviii.
101. Philippa Strachey was Secretary of a voluntary Women's Service Bureau, run by the London Suffrage Society, which had provided a number of officers in the women's corps. According to Lady Rhondda, Strachey had reported her Committee's concern about the state of affairs in the WRAF, and that they had decided they could not continue to recruit for either officers or rank and file in the WRAF unless things changed. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, (Lady Rhondda) p. 385.
102. Cmd 254/1919, Item 72A. Extract from *Report on Conditions in regard to Women Employed on War Work in Camps*. Rhondda.
103. The Report stated that the WRNS had only begun two months before the WRAF. This was accurate according to official orders; i.e. WRNS was organised according to Fleet Order 414 (N. 344, 4 February, 1918), while the formal beginning of the WRAF could be taken either as 1 April 1918, or the date of publication of the first regulations, which was 28 March 1918. But this was an unfair comparison, for the numbers required for WRNS were far fewer than for the WRAF.
104. Paine was told about 18 August that he was being made Inspector General of the Air Force. He went to France about 24/25 August, and returned about 3 September. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, (Paine) p. 154.
105. As Controller-General of Equipment in the RAF, Brancker had been a member of the first Air Council, but was absent when Douglas-Pennant started work, as he had been sent on a mission to the US. He returned in August 1918 and persuaded Weir he should replace Paine, leaving the man who had temporarily replaced him as Controller of Equipment. Initially Weir was reluctant: 'I think ye're a wee bit flippant for the pairsonnel' - but agreed in the end. Brancker was killed in the crash of Airship R101. Basil Collier, *Heavenly Adventurer - Sefton Brancker and the Dawn of British Aviation* (1959) pp. 86 and 89.
106. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, (Douglas-Pennant) p. 65.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid, (Brancker) p. 309.
109. Ibid.

110. Douglas-Pennant to MGP, 29 August 1918, Cmd. 192/1919, No. 13, p. 5.
111. Memorandum to Rt Hon. Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the RAF, 28 February 1919, Cmd. 182/1919, p. 11.
112. Douglas-Pennant to Weir, 2 September 1918, Cmd 182/1919, Item 15.
113. Gwynne-Vaughan was called for interview at the Air Ministry on 1 September, and took up her post ten days later. War Diary, PRO WO95/84. Her appointment was welcomed by Chalmers Watson, who wrote to her old colleague that she was 'thankful to think that there is again one of the chief women in the Corps, a woman with a proper outlook', and that she rejoiced 'to think that at last there is a chance to put right the scandal of the RAF motor girls, their behaviour in London and elsewhere is enough to bring discredit on anything connected with women's employment'. Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time, A Life of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 1879 - 1967* (1969) pp. 195 - 6.
114. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, (Paine) p. 155.
115. Izzard, op. cit., pp. 197 - 8.
116. Cmd. 182/1919; Cmd 254/1919.
117. Harmsworth Report, 'Dismissal of Miss Douglas-Pennant', 7 November 1918, PRO Air 2/11898.
118. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, op. cit.
119. The War Office and Air Ministry were combined on 10 January 1919, and Churchill was responsible for both until February 1921.
120. Churchill to General Seely, 22 February 1919, PRO Air 2/11890.
121. 13 March 1919, 113 H.C. Deb 5s, Cols. 1578 - 1612 (Churchill from Col. 1600).
122. W.A. Robinson to Miss Douglas-Pennant, 5 March 1919, Cmd 182/1919, Item 31, op. cit.
123. Cmd. 182/1919, Nos. 32 - 9.
124. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, Appendix No. 1, Statement of Case Lodged on Behalf of Miss Violet Douglas-Pennant, pp. 396 - 9, op. cit.
125. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, pp. xxxi - xlix.
126. *The Times*, 9 December 1919.
127. Violet Douglas Pennant, *Under the Search-Light; A Record of a Great Scandal* (1922).

128. For example, David Ockham, *The English Dreyfus Case* (1922), published by the author. In 1930 a member of the Air Ministry staff complained of a draft statement by the Attorney-General, intended to appease Douglas-Pennant, that it was an admission of a 'Dreyfus' case; that those who knew the facts at the Air Ministry had, for the previous ten years, been defending as just a decision they knew to be unjust. Minute 3, WJN, 28 July 1930, PRO Air 2/11905.
129. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, xxxviii-xxxix, 40 - 7.
130. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, 1919, Appendix No. 19 (4)6, p. 398.
131. Sir Harold Morris Q.C., *Back View* (1960) p. 176 - 80.
132. K. Furse, *The Story of the WRAF*, typescript, FP/BRU.
133. First Deputation of Members of Douglas-Pennant Committee received by the Attorney-General (Sir William Jowitt), Friday 31 July 1931; verbatim account, PRO PREM 1/205.
134. Second Deputation Received by the Attorney-General, Sir Thomas Inskip, 22 June 1932, *ibid.*
135. Douglas-Pennant's solicitors to Stanley Baldwin, 4 February 1937, 4 February 1937, *ibid.* Baldwin refused to reply: 18 March 1937, *ibid.*
136. Basil Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 93 - 4.
137. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
138. Izzard, *op. cit.*, p. 190.
139. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
140. K. Furse to V. Markham, 15 August 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.
141. *Select Committee Report, V.D-P.*, (Paine) p. 156.
142. Izzard, *op. cit.*, p. 184 - 5.
143. See Appendix VII for biographical notes.
144. David Mitchell to Dr Letitia Fairfield, 3 September 1964, David Mitchell Papers, 1, ML.
145. Fairfield to Mitchell, 6 September 1964, *ibid.* (All the following quotations by Fairfield).
146. *Ibid.*
147. An article on 'Women in Public Administration' by Adelaide Anderson describes how the *National (Health) Insurance Act* had brought the highest extension of central administrative work to

women at that time. Douglas-Pennant was one of the first female Insurance Commissioners appointed, who shared control of the work of the women Inspectors. *New Statesmen*, November 1913, Special Supplement on the Awakening of Women. (Editor. Mrs Sidney Webb).

148. Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (1976) p. 318.
149. K. Furse, 'Sex Education', typescript, Box DM 190 2/3, FP/BRU.
150. Izzard, op. cit., pp. 136 - 7.
151. Ibid., p. 136.
152. V. Markham to Tennant, 11 June 1918, LSE Markham 4/13.
153. Furse to Markham, 1 September 1918, LSE Markham 4/16.
154. Furse to Markham, 4 September 1918, ibid.
155. Typed note by Air Vice-Marshal Sir John W. Cordingley, 6 September 1967, Trefusis Forbes Papers, Box 3, AC72/17, RAF Museum, Hendon.
156. *Manchester Dispatch* 23 February 1918.
157. Mitchell interview with Dr Fairfield, 11 September 1964, op. cit.
158. Mairi Chisholm to David Mitchell, 9 September 1965, D. Mitchell Papers (1), ML.
159. W. Weir to Jowitt, 29 June 1931, PRO PREM 1/205.
160. David Mitchell to Mairi Chisholm, 31 July 1964, D. Mitchell Papers (1) ML.
161. Mairi Chisholm, one of the two 'Heroines of Pervyse', (Mitchell, 1966, op. cit., pp. 128 - 39) had gone to Hurst Park with her friend, Baroness de T'Serclaes, after their work in Flanders. According to Fairfield, then medical officer for the WRAF, each accused the other of trying to seduce them. They had a lurid reputation as lesbians, and Fairfield had allowed Chisholm to resign on 'medical grounds'. David Mitchell interview with Letitia Fairfield, 11 September 1964, D. Mitchell Papers (1) ML.
162. Mitchell to Chisholm, 31 July 1964, op. cit.
163. Chisholm to Mitchell, 9 September 1965, op. cit.

CHAPTER 11

AFTERMATH

The First World War ended on 11 November, 1918. The Germans signed the Armistice early that morning, and it came into force at 11 a.m. The reaction of those in the trenches has been described thus:

...for most men, when the appointed hour struck, the chief sensation was incredulous surprise at the unwonted silence. After 51 months it seemed unnatural not to hear gunfire somewhere. Many felt uneasy, at a loss. And then, as they grew accustomed to the quiet, there came a vast, deep sense of relief. Later still, for some there would be jubiliation; for all, the reckoning.'

In London, the end of the war was greeted noisily: 'a poignant explosion of joy and grief which grew from nothing to near pandemonium in the time taken by Big Ben to chime the momentous hour'.² Some recognised that the occasion marked something more than the end of hostility: one observer described his immediate feeling of melancholy as he realised 'that a great and unique episode in my life was past and gone...Our sense of the value of life and its excitements, so vividly heightened by the War is, with one final leap of its flame today, about to expire in its ashes. Tomorrow we return to the monotonous and the humdrum'.³

Yet there were thousands whose spontaneous reaction was to share in a public demonstration - including Vera Brittain, who, despite having read about the German retreat for some time, confessed that she had 'ceased to think of the War as ever ending, and much less ending in victory'.⁴ Her first thoughts were for those who had been killed, but still she left the Millbank hospital where she had been working,

and struggled through 'the waving, shrieking crowds' to the centre of London. It was 'like August 1914 all over again', with a huge crowd gathering in front of Buckingham Palace calling for King George, and similar scenes of rejoicing throughout the country.⁶

Margot Asquith, wife of Herbert Asquith, the ex-Prime Minister, joined the crowd outside Buckingham Palace, where she found members of the WAACs and WRNS parading in the outer yard: 'when I stopped to look up at the King, their Commander-in-Chief, with the rudeness habitual to women in authority, hustled me unceremoniously out of the way'.⁶ Finding herself 'pushed about by female agriculturists, female soldiers and female police' she 'took refuge from the rain with the King of Portugal'.⁷ Such manifestations of bossiness might have been more tolerable if the officer in question had been male: Mrs Asquith's response illustrates a particular aspect of the resentment sometimes felt by women themselves toward members of their own sex holding positions previously reserved for men.

*

I. 'NO PLACE FOR WOMEN'.

Once the war was over, the War Office established in principle that the QMAAC should be dispersed as soon as possible after general demobilisation commenced, regardless of the outcome of discussions about its long-term continuation.⁸ A protracted argument broke out between the Finance Office, and other officials including the Chief Controller of QMAAC, about the length of notice and amount of pay to be given to QMAAC members on demobilisation. For its part, the WRAF were still appealing for some 25,000 recruits in November, though anxiety had already been expressed about its future.⁹ The Air Council

decided that the whole matter of post-war employment of women in the RAF ought to be dealt with in conjunction with the other fighting departments, and the Secretary of State for Air undertook to confer with the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War.¹⁰

In the Women's Corps, the end of the war marked a shift of attention from difficulties of recruitment to the immediate problems of demobilisation, as well as the longer term issue of whether the women's services had a role to play in peacetime defence plans. From the start, most of the members of the women's corps themselves were keen that their organisations should be retained in some form. The WAAC Magazine printed wistful editorials bemoaning demobilisation: the Armistice was described as a 'fatal blow' to the Recruiting Branch of the QMAAC, and the end of the corps as a sad moment in the lives of QMAAC members.¹¹ Many would regret the breaking up of the Corps: 'Hundreds of us have been thrown into a comradeship with new types of women - women of classes and callings unknown to each other'.¹²

The *Daily Mail* reported that most WAAC were sorrowful at the thought that the corps might be disbanded entirely, leaving no permanent memorial of its work and traditions, and described the suggestion of one ex-WAAC that in the membership of the corps lay the nucleus of a great freemasonry of women.¹³ And 'Why not?' asked the *Daily Mail*:

Women have learned to work and endure and to play and to pray together, to help one another over rough roads sharing privations and joys. In this great comradeship of the war is the potential beginning of a wonderful sisterhood of women. If the end of the war sees the end of the 'Waacs' the nation will lose; in some adapted shape their services, if carefully organised on a voluntary basis, would be of tremendous use to the country. That the spirit of the 'Waacs' should be preserved

in some great society of women is of still greater importance. It is for the 'Waacs' themselves to make the beginning.'¹⁴

A year later, when the *QMAAC Old Comrades' Association Gazette* was fully established, members of that corps poured out nostalgic letters describing memories of their service experience:

The glorious comrade-ship, the feeling that we were really up against things and doing something that was really worth while, fired us with enthusiasm and interest, and gave us something to hold on to, that was true and real and brought to the surface the highest and best ideals. We were able to know and understand one another much better than we can ever hope to do under the conditions of ordinary life. These days of peace that we have looked forward to, and prayed for for so long, seem to fall very short of expectations.'¹⁵

That was written by a member of QMAAC based at Abbeville. Norah Atkinson, stationed at Etaples, was just as enthusiastic. She explained that she was sending in her subscription to the Old Comrades' Association because she didn't

ever want to feel that I am not one of the old corps. Isn't it surprising what a tremendous love one takes for these kind of things after one leaves - I am sure we did nothing but 'grouse' whilst we were in France, and I only wish I had never, never grumbled even once. I have missed the old life more than I can say since I got back - did you ever go to our camp at Etaples? It was just the most beautiful spot ever created, I think, and in the summer, well, it was just glorious. Often when I sit in this office, and look out upon the dingy old chimneys and buildings opposite, my mind goes back to the dear little office by the riverside at Etaples - built on the sands, with wild flowers growing all round...'¹⁶

A suggestion favoured even by some women themselves was that women should not necessarily remain in the military services after the war, but that they should utilise the experience they had gained in a practical manner. The QMAAC Unit Administrator at Eastern Command proposed the formation of a 'Women's Service League'; a scheme for the post-war employment of women both at home and in the colonies, the purpose of which was 'to solve the problem of long felt want of

household workers etc., daily and otherwise - cooks, housemaids, farm workers - AND to relieve congestion of woman labour which would inevitably follow demobilisation of the Army'.¹⁷ Women who joined the League should be officered by ex-corps officials who wanted to keep working; all the women would be under a mild form of discipline and would be 'helped, guided and protected'.¹⁸ Another QMAAC administrator supported the proposal that large bodies of QMAAC could be sent to the colonies, by citing the benefits of their recent experience: the women would now make excellent colonists, having learnt hygiene, discipline, self-control, self-reliance, and also having lived in close contact with large numbers of men, they would not be so likely to contract undesirable friendships.¹⁹

Some women did take up the opportunity to start new lives: the *Old Comrades' Association Gazette* published a letter from M. Munro Mathews, a QMAAC administrator, who took out sixty women to Australia.²⁰ She reported that domestic service was by far the best work for women in that country, for they got paid and fed well, and were generally kindly treated. But she issued a warning note that the authorities at home should 'make the girls understand that they may encounter much hostility from the Australian girls. They are, in most cases, frankly antagonistic, and make sport of deserted Australian war brides'.²¹ Ms Mathews suggested it was inadvisable for women to go into the country or onto a station, where they would have to carry logs, water, wash sheep shearers' overalls, and cook for large numbers. But 'no woman with any ordinary capabilities need be out of work 24 hours in Sydney' - as long as they would accept domestic work.

Clerical work was much harder to get, as Australian girls wanted to keep that for themselves.

Katharine Furse took up the idea of domestic work as a remedy for unemployment with characteristic enthusiasm. Writing to Lady Rhondda for support, she complained that nothing was being done to persuade women to go into domestic service, though the need was clear, or to ensure that if they did so they would find attractive conditions: 'Beds, food and warmth are waiting for thousands of them and yet one is afraid that the Government will give women out of work donation benefits instead!!!'.²² Furse wanted to organise a corps of women to supply servants to employers, while retaining 'a hold on conditions and insisting on the servants playing the game'.²³ She elaborated on her scheme, suggesting that not only would it supply an urgent need, but it would 'keep up the Service spirit and...provide amusement and education for the members of the Corps when off duty'.²⁴ The Corps could be called the 'War Service Reserve'; the women could wear a uniform and all ex-service women of good character could be eligible. If there was adequate organisation, domestic service could 'be raised to its proper and dignified position among Women's Professions'.²⁵ What was needed, claimed Dame Katharine, was 'a great Empire Scheme to supply the requirements of the Dominions as well as the British Isles', and before the various women's corps were demobilised and the 'splendid spirit of these Services is lost to the Nation the Government should seriously consider the formation of a War Workers' Reserve for this purpose'.²⁶ The functions of such a Reserve need not be limited to domestic work, as all women workers could be accepted, and it would aim to avoid class distinctions and thus

maintain 'the greater sympathy and mutual understanding which now exists among women performing different types of work in the Corps'.²⁷

Lady Londonderry nursed a similar plan, though the two women did not combine efforts on this occasion. At a meeting of the Society of Women's Journalists at the end of 1918, Lady Londonderry announced that the Women's Legion intended to form a Special Reserve, in which all women who had been doing national work would be enrolled, and their services could be called upon as the occasion arose.²⁸ A proposal she made, that servants should be provided with proper contracts, drew a furious response from one reader of the *Morning Post*, who complained strenuously about Lady Londonderry's suggestion that servants might have half Sundays off: what, enquired the reader, would this mean to the business man? 'If Sunday is to be given up entirely to the servants, are they to have no hot meals, or any friends, or are their wives to absent themselves in the kitchen on the only day their husbands are at home'?²⁹ Another, equally bitterly, insisted that it was time that 'This class was made to understand that war jobs couldn't last for ever'; '...as the men return cheerfully to their former work so should the maid, the factory girls, the shop girl, and the 'bus conductress gladly go back to her old place, and prove that patriotism was her call when it came, and home and its working her pride and place today'.³⁰ Lady Londonderry herself was prone to use similar arguments: in a letter to *The Times* she reminded all Service women who had

shown by their actions in the past that they had the welfare of their country at heart, that home work is every bit as important for the stability of the Empire as the work which they have been carrying on during the war. We have endeavoured to bridge the gulf between war conditions and peace, and it rests with them to make household service as successful in the homes as they have made war work in the field'.³¹

Katharine Furse persisted in her attempts to persuade the Government to set up a scheme, but she failed to gain the support of the two heads of the other women's corps, Mrs Burleigh Leach and Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, and after a time the idea of a 'Corps' solution fizzled out.³² Despite her lack of enthusiasm for Katharine Furse's project, the Chief Controller of the QMAAC viewed her Corps as an effective preparation for colonial marriages. In an interview in July 1918, she had foreseen that when peace arrived there would be a great migration of women to the Dominions. 'Colonial soldiers are eagerly seeking our girls in marriage whilst the war is actually on'; when it was over, they would unquestionably be keener still to have wives who knew how to work at farming, in dairies, tree cutting, fruitgrowing, and domestic duties: 'There will never have been such a time for women who can really and truly become "helpmeets" being at a premium, and a vast number of WAACs who have laboured hard and loyally for three years or more will certainly then reap a well-earned reward'.³³ She, for one, 'did not look with any trepidation or doubt towards the day when munition-making shall stop, when the discharge of thousands of soldiers and sailors shall necessitate the girls who now occupy their places in office, warehouse or workshop finding new spheres of labour'.³⁴ She believed the women would adapt themselves to such spheres because they would have had the discipline and training:

...the sense of reliance which men have so long had and women failed in ere the war brought out these grand traits in my sex also. Women who have these powerful forces behind them can never really fail; they will go into fresh fields, into new work, into undreamed of spheres of labour, and succeed just as admirably as they have hitherto done under the QMAAC banner.³⁵

Sadly, the reality of the aftermath of war did not live up to such optimism, at least as far as women were concerned: the consensus of most observers is that the gains women made during the war were soon lost.³⁶

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There were protracted negotiations between the Treasury and the War Office about the terms of discharge to be offered to officials and members of QMAAC and the other enrolled Corps.³⁷ The War Office insisted that the position of women in enrolled corps differed materially from that of civilian workers because they were held by the terms of their engagement, and were not at liberty to return to civil employment as and when they pleased. Under the terms of their enrolment they had also rendered themselves liable to special penalties, which meant their conditions of service approximated those of a soldier.

Discussions between the two departments continued without resolution, prompting the intervention of Sir Charles Harris, the Permanent Financial Secretary of the War Office, who told the Treasury that 'The ladies at the heads of these different organisations take a very grave view of the effect upon the women of what you are prepared to give, and seem to anticipate a demonstration in Whitehall'.³⁸ Harris could understand that the Treasury had to consider the possibility of claims from, say, clerks in Munitions works, if clerks in the QMAAC were given the high benefit for which they asked. But did they not agree, he enquired, that the fact that the women were entitled under the contract of service to a month's wages in lieu of notice if they were *not* given a month's notice, made a valid

distinction between the two classes? In many cases the officials in charge of the women could not foresee when their work would be ended, so that often a month's wages on discharge would be given, and there would be a genuine grievance if some women who had been warned only got fourteen days. To clinch the matter, some of the women in question had been under fire; many of them had been mixed up in the retreat the previous spring, and they had all been encouraged to think themselves 'soldiers' yet they were not given a war gratuity. It was not an occasion for taking a strictly financial view.³⁹

A compromise suggestion from the Treasury failed to satisfy the War Office.⁴⁰ It was pointed out again that there was an increasing tendency in the army and among the public at large to regard the women in the light of women soldiers, and consequently to compare their emoluments with those to which the soldier was entitled.⁴¹ The Army Council was convinced that it was a factor which must be taken into serious account, though the comparison was largely based on a misapprehension of the women's emoluments and liabilities. The soldiers received a war gratuity in addition to their 28 days pay and allowances, and the Army Council believed that any attempt to fix the pay on discharge for women at less than 28 days might lead to a demand for the gratuity as well. The matter was urgent; demobilisation was being delayed because of lack of agreement.⁴²

The duplicity of some of those involved in this debate is revealed by a letter to the Treasury in which Sir Charles Harris explained that while for his part he was quite content with the settlement the Treasury suggested, he was sending an 'official letter', which repeated demands for more, 'because the ladies are very

insistent, but if you will reply in the sense of your note to me I will oppose to the best of my ability any proposal to worry you further. I am burning to get these ladies demobilised, but have had no success so far.'⁴³ The Treasury finally agreed that in deference to the renewed representations from the Army Council, Women's Corps officials should receive two months pay and allowances; mobiles who enrolled for twelve months would get 28 days furlough, and otherwise, if not transferred away from the place of their enrolment, 7 days, as immobile members. In view of this concession the Treasury expected the three service departments to press forward the work of demobilisation of the Corps as quickly as possible.

The immediate usefulness of the women's corps was still evident, despite their uncertain future. Early in January 1919 the QMAAC was asked to provide twenty women searchers who could speak German, to work in Cologne.⁴⁴ At this time, too, when arguments about whether or not the women should be regarded as soldiers were in full swing, it was announced that members of the QMAAC and Women's Legion under contract with the War Office were now eligible for the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire, and could thus appear in notices in the London Gazette.⁴⁵ The following month the War Office reported that while some 3,000 QMAAC had been discharged, no great progress had been made with the demobilisation of the women's corps, for frequently it was not possible to let the women go without specially retaining men to take their place.⁴⁶ In certain cases it had even been found necessary to allow fresh enrolments in order to replace either men eligible for demobilisation or women who had completed the term of their 12 month's engagement.

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Although the retention of the women's corps was seriously considered in the months immediately after the war, with hindsight it is clear that their eventual disbandment was a foregone conclusion, given the circumstances of post-war Britain. Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, increasingly concerned about the unrest amongst officers and other ranks in the WRAF, and provoked by the lack of information about the future of her service, complained to the Deputy Master General of Personnel at the Air Ministry, and asked for a decision from the Air Council about the future of the corps.⁴⁷

In March 1919 the Air Council considered a proposal that the WRAF should become a permanent and integral part of the RAF, and that the Air Force Act should be amended to subject the WRAF to air force discipline.⁴⁸ During the Air Council's deliberations it was argued that female labour was cheaper than male labour because they were not under full military obligations; to set against that, it was not necessarily cheaper in the long run, as sometimes more women than men were needed, and that would mean more individuals to pay, as well as separate accommodation to be provided. Sooner or later, too, equality of pay would probably be demanded; in fact, every reason put forward in favour of retaining a women's air force corps was countered by an argument against doing so. To the suggestion that a shortage of male labour was good reason to retain the WRAF, it was argued that given the inevitable reduction of all the armed forces, it was essential to have as many potential [male] combatants as possible on the establishment. The idea of a Women's Reserve Corps, which could form the basis of a new WRAF in any future war, was dismissed on the

grounds that a war of the magnitude of the present was 'not likely to recur'. Other objections put forward were that there was no precedent for including women in the fighting forces; that it was improbable that Parliament would sanction such a move, and that as the WRAF had not been under the Air Force Act during the war, why should it be now war was over?⁴⁹

The Director of Personnel at the Air Ministry believed the question should be largely determined by financial considerations, and he thought retaining a women's force on a military basis would greatly increase costs. The President of the Air Council could see no reason why the women should not have a permanent part to play in the RAF if it existed at all: it would 'accord with the Spirit of the times if women were placed as nearly as possible under the conditions of service as men'.⁵⁰ It was agreed that alterations to the Air Force Act should be drafted by the Secretary, in order to see how the Act could apply to the WRAF, and in August 1919 the Director of Training and Organisation of the Air Force informed GOCs that the WRAF would form part of the permanent strength of the RAF, thus providing a nucleus which might be expanded in emergency.⁵¹ Yet just four days after the letters were sent to the GOCs, a minute from Winston Churchill asserted that: 'in principle the WRAF is to be disbanded at the earliest moment'.⁵² Barely two weeks later GOCs were informed that the earlier letter had been withdrawn.⁵³

The decision not to retain any of the three women's military corps was made under economic pressure.⁵⁴ The Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry were instructed to work out their estimates on the basis of certain assumptions: no great war for ten years; the army to

be organised only for the maintenance of order in India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine and support of civil power in Great Britain and Ireland.⁵⁵ Hankey insisted that it was absolutely vital to cut down expenditure. The Navy had been allocated £60 million, and the Army and Air Force £75 million; but he urged further economies on Lloyd George, suggesting that the Air Ministry, and the Ministries of Munitions, Shipping and Food should all be abolished as soon as possible. He believed that if such action was not taken the country faced bankruptcy: 'We are confronted by overwhelming difficulties and can only meet them by drastic economies'.⁵⁶

There was public pressure, too: an article in *The Times* at the end of August 1919 expressed surprise at the government's alleged intention to retain some 10,000 women in the Army and Air Force on a permanent basis.⁵⁷ It questioned whether the permanent existence of women's corps could be justified, and asked what duties women could possibly perform which could not be readily undertaken by men. The fact that women had been allowed to set up three separate organisations appeared, on the face of it, to be a 'needless extravagance'; now was the time to cut the losses which the administration of women's services must have involved. The women had done good work, and earned both recognition and appreciation, but, *The Times* concluded, 'let them be content. To be frank, the public has grown tired of uniformed women. A year ago they could not do enough for them. Now they don't like them a bit, and are not making things too pleasant. The Army in Peace has no place for women'.⁵⁸

That was that. Air Ministry Weekly Orders of 7 October 1919 ordered the disbandment of the WRAF by 8 November, though certain

personnel were to be retained temporarily, in RAF Records, WRAF Records and the WRAF Hospital at Hampstead.⁵⁹ By November too, final orders for demobilisation of QMAAC in France had been published.⁶⁰ WRNS Acquaint No. 268 of 31 October 1919 stated that the Admiralty approved the closure of HQ Office WRNS on 15 December 1919, and the whole WRNS organisation would cease to exist on that date.⁶¹ In May 1920 an ACI announced that the Record Office of QMAAC would move to the War Office from 49 Grosvenor Street on 30 April 1920, and the headquarters of the corps would cease to exist the same day.⁶²

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II. WOMEN'S RESERVE COMMITTEE, 1920.

A Women's Reserve Committee was set up to explore the question of the formation of a Women's Reserve, and to formulate a scheme for the Army Council to consider.⁶³ It was composed of ten men and eight women, including all three heads of the Women's Corps: Dame Katharine Furse, Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan and Dame Florence Leach, and its Chairman was Major General Burnett-Hitchcock, Director General of Mobilisation and Recruiting, fresh from chairing a committee which had examined the reorganisation of Voluntary Aid Detachments.⁶⁴

The Committee produced a report in December, 1920.⁶⁵ It had assumed that the question of military policy in relation to the formation of a women's reserve was really a matter for the Army Council alone to decide: its function was to explore the question from the point of view of the women who had served in the last war, and to formulate a scheme based on their experience. But several of its members had insisted that they could not formulate a scheme for a reserve until three main questions of principle had been settled: the

extent to which women should be employed with the Army in war; the extent to which a military organisation was desirable in war for women at home and at bases overseas; and the length of time which would elapse after mobilisation before women could be sent overseas. The question of how far it was desirable to have military organisations for women had been discussed at some length, but after being told that this was a matter outside their terms of reference, the Committee let it rest: the report merely records that 'a considerable divergence of opinion evinced itself'.

The female members of the Committee had been unanimously of the opinion that it was desirable that in any future war women employed with the army on clerical, domestic or other duties should be regularly enlisted and their officers commissioned; they opposed employment of women under the system of enrolment. They supported the idea of at least a cadre organisation in peace; they recommended that women officers and non-commissioned officers should receive training; and they drew attention to the expensive experiments and delays in the improvisation of a corps of women during the late war.

Despite agreement that there was scope for a corps of women serving with the Army in war - and if they to be required immediately on mobilisation, their readiness was best assured by the formation of a reserve in peace - the committee recognised that the formation of a women's reserve would inevitably involve expenditure. It had been told that any funds for a women's reserve would have to be found from the total allocated to the Regular Army and Territorial Force; and they concluded that further consideration was needed to decide whether the formation of a Reserve could be justified financially in

competition with other services, 'of a more immediate and effective nature'.

The Committee produced lengthy recommendations about the possible organisation of service, both in a reserve and on mobilisation, but in the end concluded that it was unable to justify a decisive commitment to the establishment of a peacetime women's reserve. The report emphasised the desire of the women who had served in the corps to receive official status. [The majority of the Committee believed that it would be desirable to have attestation similar to men in the services, though some members had expressed a preference for service on a civil contract.] The Financial representative attached a note to the end of the report. He did not agree with the formation of a women's reserve until the principles referred to had been settled, though he had signed the report. But he was adamant about one thing: if a reserve of the character proposed was set up in peacetime, it would sooner or later cost a lot of money:

We shall not find commissioned and enlisted women attending annual camps without a demand for pay and allowances like Territorial Forces and men. They will not be content with the kind of assistance we give cadets who have no military status. The object of the scheme is not to provide a force for whom military training is needed in peace, but to find women who will do in war what they do in peace. Anything beyond this will be done for reasons of sentiment, which have no particular connections with the Army Estimates.⁶⁶

The report circulated around the War Office early in 1921, and drew a mixed response. The Adjutant-General strongly favoured a Women's Reserve, to be enrolled in peace time and enlisted in war: run on the 'right lines', it should involve 'little or no expense'.⁶⁷ The Director of Organisation was of the same opinion, but the Quarter-master General believed that the questions of principle raised

required much further discussion.⁶⁹ He was not in favour of the kind of reserve contemplated: it seemed to him 'a useless proposition to start companies and platoons of mixed services. We do not do it in the Regular Army, and we should not do so if a reserve of the description at issue started'.⁶⁹ He also thought the moment was inopportune to launch a scheme which was likely to involve increasing expenditure. Before steps could be taken to start a women's organisation, much greater consideration would have to be given to the problem than had been done by the Committee, which, he complained, consisted 'mainly of representatives of the various women's organisations that grew up during the war'.⁷⁰ He thought the Committee had lost sight of the main issue: how an organisation of the type in question could be constructed to suit military requirements, rather than [though he did not say so explicitly] the desires of women who might run it.

The Financial Secretary of the War Office was even more scathing. He claimed that -

The majority of women who 'come to the front' in these movements are sure to be the type found in women's organisations generally, who will be satisfied with nothing less than complete equality with men. It is easy to foresee the development, once military status is given by enlistment and commission, through the usual stages of 'honorary' and 'relative' to 'substantive' rank, with staff posts in the War Office and in Commands, equality of pay and ultimately, I suppose, allowances in aid of cost of maintaining a husband and children. We were not very far off some of these stages in the Great War. The fact that this Committee recommended lower rates of pay will be entirely swept aside.⁷¹

The Army Council finally discussed the Report at a meeting in June 1921.⁷² Its members were asked, first, to decide whether the formation of a Women's Reserve was desirable at the present time: if it were agreed that it was, then they should consider whether women

should be enlisted, or enrolled with a view to enlistment on mobilisation. The Council concluded that the formation of a Women's Reserve was not desirable; all that was necessary was the draft scheme, embodying the experiences gained in the war. Hopes that the Women's Corps might continue in some form were dashed.

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III. TOWARDS 'MILITARY STATUS'

Twenty years later, and nearly two years after the beginning of the Second World War, it was announced in the House of Commons that members of the Women's Army and Air Force Corps were - finally - to be granted full military status. As in the First World War the attitudes of those in authority towards the corps were determined by pragmatic considerations: full military status was accorded mainly as a way of discouraging desertion from the women's corps by assuring more rigorous control and discipline. There were a few who believed it was a timely and deserved recognition of the true position of women in the services, but these were a minority.

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At the end of 1933 Lady Londonderry wrote to *The Times*, arguing 'in the strongest manner possible that any fresh organisation of women, tending towards militarism, is to be deprecated'.⁷³ She had been provoked to write by articles and photographs that had recently appeared in various newspapers which referred to the formation of 'an entirely new organisation for women, to be known as the "Women's Reserve"', run by a Commandant Mary S. Allen. Lady Londonderry pointed out that the Army Council officially recognised only two women's reserves at this time: The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (Ambulance Car Corps)⁷⁴ and the Women's Legion Motor Drivers.⁷⁵ As the President of the Women's Legion (which, she reminded readers, had been the parent body of the war-time organisations which had done service during the war) she suggested 'that if it was thought necessary and desirable by those in authority, a scheme should be devised for a national reserve of women for emergency purposes,

organised in cooperation with the recognised representatives of the women's associations which were still in existence'.⁷⁶ Such a body could serve a useful purpose; but Lady Londonderry believed it was wrong to start an entirely new organisation which had no recognition from the authorities and which would be run, as far as she could see 'practically on Fascist lines'. What was required was to galvanise the existing bodies into life, form them into one unit, and organise them into divisions according to the nature of the duties to be performed.

Commandant Allen responded to Lady Londonderry's attack by insisting that there was no other working organisation which enrolled and trained women on the lines she had outlined; it was unnecessary to belittle the interest and enthusiasm shown by individuals in her scheme, and surely it was a most worthy ambition to prepare oneself and others to be ready for any emergency?⁷⁷ She denied that her Reserve tended any more toward militarism than the existing reserves recognised by the Army Council, and she claimed that her Women's Reserve had done precisely what Lady Londonderry had said was required: it had galvanised the existing bodies into life. Now everybody was 'speaking with enthusiasm of the necessity for such a scheme where before the initiation of the movement nothing was being done'.⁷⁸ Little more was heard of Commandant Allen's Reserve,⁷⁹ but Lady Londonderry was sufficiently galvanised to begin lengthy negotiations with the defence ministries. She attempted to obtain formal approval of her own scheme, which she described as being devised 'for the resuscitation of the Women's Legion to provide a capable and efficient body of women, whose services could be offered

to the State as required in an emergency'.⁸⁰ But this time Lady Londonderry failed, despite her favoured social position.

The setting up of voluntary organisations with military overtones was reminiscent of the early days of World War I, but such groups were not very popular in Britain at the end of 1933, even though in January of that year Hitler had secured the Chancellorship of Germany and embarked on his policy of rearming his country in defiance of the Versailles Peace Treaty. In 1932 the British Cabinet had finally abandoned the 'Ten Year Rule'. There were those who already feared the worst, but for the majority another war remained unthinkable. Such thoughts were overshadowed by the great economic depression at the end of the twenties, which resulted in the unprecedented unemployment of 1931 and 1932.

Initially, Lady Londonderry was informed that neither the Secretary of State for War nor the Admiralty objected to the existence of a resuscitated Women's Legion - indeed, the Army Council was prepared to give her Reserve 'official recognition' - provided no financial commitment of any sort was expected.⁸¹ But official recognition was delayed indefinitely; the establishment of an Executive Committee and a declaration of objectives still did not persuade the authorities to provide the formal recognition Lady Londonderry desired.⁸² There was trouble with FANY, who was fearful that amalgamation within a larger group would jeopardise its own independence and character.⁸³ Questions of principle were raised, which further delayed a decision. Was Lady Londonderry's Reserve to be the War Office's sole means of engaging the services of women (excepting VADs and Nurses) during an emergency, or would they also

recruit women through other means at the same time? And should all women employed by the War Office in an emergency be members of one military corps?⁸⁴

At the beginning of 1935, when Lord Hailsham, the Secretary of State for War, expressed the view that he could see no political objection to the launching of the scheme for a Women's Reserve such as Lady Londonderry proposed, the First Lord of the Admiralty demurred; he considered that as her desire to create a single organisation to meet the requirements of the fighting services in an emergency would affect many departments besides the Service Departments, the Cabinet should be informed of the proposal.⁸⁵ He also could not 'help doubting whether all our colleagues would agree that this is an appropriate time for launching a scheme which will no doubt be widely misrepresented as an unnecessary measure and calculated to spread a "war mentality" amongst women'.⁸⁶

The Air Board, Army Council and Admiralty finally decided that no action would be taken on the Women's Legion until the whole matter had received Cabinet approval.⁸⁷ Political events intervened to delay the matter further, but with the Prime Minister's consent, it was eventually agreed that the subject of the Women's Reserve would be referred to a Sub-Committee of the Man-Power Committee, with instructions to report back to the Man Power Committee, and so up to the Cabinet if that became necessary.⁸⁸ The Sub-Committee on Women's Reserve first met in October 1935, to consider generally whether a Women's Reserve was necessary at all, and in particular, Lady Londonderry's suggestion that the Women's Legion be resuscitated and that the government should grant it a subsidy.⁸⁹

The Sub Committee's final *Report* was published on 12 May, 1936. It concluded unequivocally that the creation of a Women's Reserve was *not* desirable.⁹⁰ It also stated that direct Government financial support should not be given to any voluntary organisation set up for the purposes as indicated in the *Report*, but that Service departments should be free to provide assistance such as the provision of lectures, if they believed it could be of value. As for the recruitment of women, although the Committee agreed it was not practicable, nor even desirable to prevent the establishment of voluntary organisations, in an emergency the source of supply of women should be coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, from whom the Service Departments would obtain women. The Service departments had reported themselves satisfied that training women *before* a war would be wasteful, as it was impossible to anticipate the exact duties on which women would be employed, and might even be harmful to future organisation.⁹¹ However, there were certain duties of a supervisory nature for which some preparatory instruction was necessary, and the Committee suggested that in these cases departments might wish to give assistance to voluntary organisations.

Two and a half years after first presenting her scheme, Lady Londonderry thus found her plan firmly rejected.⁹² To add insult to injury, a proposal by Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan for an Officers' Training Section Reserve had been - if not exactly welcomed with open arms - at least accorded a measure of approval.⁹³ As the Sub-Committee had concluded that the Ministry of Labour would be able to find the rank and file, it considered that the creation of a parallel formation as proposed by Lady Londonderry was unnecessary. By

contrast, Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan's organisation was on a much smaller scale, and would meet a definite need which the Ministry of Labour would probably be unable to fill.

According to Dame Helen's own account, after a decision had been taken to close down the activities of the new Women's Legion in the summer of 1936, members of the Officers' Training Section met and agreed that training should continue, under a different name. They decided to call themselves 'Emergency Service', and as such, received both Army and Air Councils' formal recognition as 'a voluntary organisation, the purpose of which is to train women as officers for any women's corps that may be employed, on duties other than nursing, in a national emergency'.⁹⁴ The same conditions as had been laid down for FANY and the Women's Legion Mechanical Transport Section were to apply: Emergency Service would be available when required in a national emergency; it agreed to be absorbed into any Women's Reserve which it might be decided to form and no financial assistance would be given. Four hundred potential officers were trained by Emergency Service, most of whom later joined either Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) or the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF).⁹⁵

But despite the stamp of official approval, it was not anticipated by government officials that in time of war Emergency Service would be retained as the exclusive provider of potential officers for any prospective women's corps, as is made clear by correspondence between the War Office and Labour Ministry. Duff-Cooper, Secretary of State for War in April 1937, had interpreted the decision of the Manpower Committee's Report as referring only to 'other rank' personnel, and he approached the Minister of Labour,

Ernest Brown, and asked that his department also agree to undertake the task of providing women 'officer' personnel in a future war.⁹⁶ Brown replied that he considered that the Women's Reserve Sub Committee recommendation was intended to relate to all classes of women; it did not exclude 'officer' personnel.⁹⁷ He recommended that at the commencement of an emergency the Ministry of Labour should take over records of membership from the various women's organisations, and requirements for the services of 'officer personnel' would be met as far as possible from these members.⁹⁸

The outcome of the decision that the Ministry of Labour would take over from existing women's voluntary organisations was that in August 1937, both Helen Gwynne-Vaughan and Lady Loch, who headed the Flying Section of the Women's Legion,⁹⁹ received letters from the Adjutant General, H. Knox, in which they were informed that it had been decided 'after careful consideration' that the War Office would obtain all the personnel it required, including for the 'supervisory class', through the Ministry of Labour.¹⁰⁰ To implement that decision the Minister of Labour proposed at the commencement of an emergency to take over from the women's voluntary groups, if they were agreeable, their membership records; to smooth this procedure, records should be maintained to show both qualifications possessed and training received, so that the Ministry of Labour could be in a position to meet War Office demands for supervisory personnel by calling on qualified members.

It was a blow - and an insult - to both recipients. Knox went on to say that this meant 'we at the War Office shall have no direct dealings with women's organisations in future as regards the supply of

personnel', though they would be glad to provide such help as they could towards training personnel for service in a supervisory capacity, with the proviso that any help had to be at no cost to the public. This episode has been described by Bidwell as a change of policy from the slow moving but promising outlook of 1936, to the 'disappointing, and undoubtedly ill-considered decision on the part of the Cabinet...that the whole idea of a women's service had been discarded and that if war broke out the necessary women would be recruited through the Ministry of Labour as civilians'.¹⁰¹ But it was not officially regarded as a change in policy so much as a clarification of decisions already taken, and a way of ensuring that recruitment should not be in the hands of amateurs, but firmly under the control of government departments. A repetition of the situation which had obtained during the 1914 - 1918 war, with innumerable women's groups, and overlapping and uncoordinated recruitment of women, was regarded as undesirable, though this particular attempt to address the problem admittedly was handled clumsily.

Strongly worded objections by both Lady Loch and Lady Londonderry had little immediate effect.¹⁰² Lady Londonderry complained bitterly to the Secretary of State for War, Hore-Belisha, that she had been right in her 'surmise that it was the Ministry of Labour who turned down the proposals for a Women's Reserve for the three Services'.¹⁰³ When the Ministry of Labour had put up similar proposals for recruitment in the last war, she had fought through thick and thin, and emerged triumphant: 'The women of the officer class, such as mine were, never recruited through the Labour Exchanges, as they were requested to do'.¹⁰⁴ As for the statement

that the War Office would not have direct dealings with any women's organisation, it was ridiculous and a great waste of money that a body recruited and trained for the purpose of being absorbed by the War Department should be turned over to another department which had nothing to do with recruiting and knew nothing of what was required: 'I can only add that they are up to their same old "Bolshy" methods, that they tried to impose on us before'.¹⁰⁶

Although Lady Londonderry was told that the question could not be reopened, the Secretary of State for War himself expressed doubts as to the soundness of the Minister of Labour's proposals, and directed that the question should be reviewed.¹⁰⁶ At an Informal Army Council [IAC] meeting in November 1937 it was agreed that the Ministry of Labour should be told that it was the Army Council's intention to allow the women's organisations to continue, and that it considered it would be invidious to compel organisations of this character to go to the Labour Exchanges.¹⁰⁷ So perhaps Lady Londonderry did win a minor victory, after all.

At the November meeting of the IAC the Adjutant General had expressed the view that the most useful of the three organisations under discussion was Emergency Service, the only one not recognised officially by the War Office.¹⁰⁸ At the end of 1937 Emergency Service was finally recognised on the same terms as WTS (FANY) and WLMT; provided certain conditions were met, this official recognition would be notified in Army Orders, and the organisation would be included in the monthly Army Lists.¹⁰⁹ Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan accepted the conditions unhesitatingly.¹¹⁰

From the end of 1937 plans were set in motion for the formation of an official Women's Army Reserve, and a draft for a wartime organisation of women was prepared.¹¹¹ Back in 1933, when Lady Londonderry's Women's Legion proposal was being considered, the Quartermaster-General had dug out the 1920 Burnett-Hitchcock *Report on the Women's Reserve*, and had commented on the fact that it had recommended the formation of such a reserve in peacetime on a military basis.¹¹² Early in 1938 the new Adjutant General requested that the recommendations of the CID *Sub-Committee Report on the Women's Reserve* be rescinded, and that the 1920 Burnett-Hitchcock report should be the basis on which to build the new women's organisation.¹¹³ However, it was not until April that year that the War Office approached the Secretary of the CID, requesting that the ruling given by the Sub Committee, that a Women's Reserve was not required in peace, and that the supply of women for service with the Forces was the function of the Ministry of Labour, be reconsidered.¹¹⁴ While the Army had not objected when the decision had first been made, with the organisation of women now assuming a new importance in the Army's plans to make best use of manpower, they could not afford to leave the work of enrolment and planning till war broke out. There is no record of a formal change of the ruling, but plans to establish a women's reserve went ahead. Initially it was suggested that there should be two separate women's reserves, one to serve the regular army, and another the Territorial Army, but this idea was soon abandoned.¹¹⁵

The next step bore an uncanny resemblance to early 1917: it was decided to invite 'representative ladies in order to explain the proposals and ascertain their reactions. If the scheme is to be a

success...we must at the outset take the ladies into our confidence and give serious consideration to any suggestions they may have to make.''¹⁶ Among the women invited to the War Office on 6 May, 1938, were stalwarts of the Great War: Lady Londonderry, Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan and Dame Katharine Furse.''¹⁷ It was explained that there would be one women's organisation for both Regular and Territorial Army: that the Air Ministry had agreed to share this reserve, and that the Admiralty was 'favourably disposed', but preferred to examine its requirements further before deciding if they wanted women raised for service with the Navy. The purpose of the meeting was to see how far the various women's organisations could help the War Office. There was general agreement to cooperate with the scheme, providing that existing organisations be absorbed, as far as possible, as complete units within the proposed framework. Katharine Furse argued that members of women's organisations did not wish to be regarded as camp followers, and would like to be given proper status. The IAC later considered her proposition, but decided it was both unnecessary and undesirable: as Creedy explained: 'I have a feeling that it is better not to place women on precisely the same footing as enlisted soldiers, but I confess that is a matter of *feeling*...'.''¹⁸

Details of the proposed women's reserve were considered over the following months. The title 'Auxiliary Territorial Service' (ATS) was finally agreed upon, after the 'Ladies' had opposed 'Women's Auxiliary Defence Service' on the grounds that 'WADS' was quite unacceptable, and because they considered that the word 'women' should not be included, as experience had shown that this discouraged the younger generation from joining up.''¹⁹ The Air Ministry would have preferred

that the word 'Territorial' had not been used, but agreed not to object provided it was made clear when the scheme was launched it was not solely for the Army, and would serve the RAF as well.

On 9 September, 1939, the ATS was formally authorised by a Royal Warrant.¹²⁰ By November, plans had begun for a new - separate - women's corps to work with the Navy, to be known as the Women's Royal Naval Service, and in April 1939 Mrs Laughton Matthew was appointed Director WRNS.¹²¹ Unlike her contemporary, Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, Katharine Furse did not take an active part in the revived WRNS: in her view, younger women were needed.¹²² The ATS did not survive for long as a combined corps for Army and Air Force; in June 1939 the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) was constituted as a separate organisation, its connection with the ATS finally severed by a Royal Warrant dated 28 June 1939.¹²³ Miss J. Trefusis Forbes was invited to be Director of WAAF, whose size was then anticipated as about 5,000 members.¹²⁴

Problems arose in the ATS months after the war began. In April 1940 the War Office was asked by the Select Committee on National Expenditure to prepare a Memorandum on the organisation and administration of the ATS for its Sub-Committee on Army Services.¹²⁵ When the Committee's Report appeared in August, despite expressions of appreciation at the 'very valuable work which the ATS are now doing', the general conclusion was critical: '...the best return for the expenditure on this Service has not been in the past, and is not now being, achieved'.¹²⁶

The Civil Member at the War Office, Sir Edward Grigg, had independently been instructed to investigate the ATS, and when he

presented his views to the new Secretary of State, he made it clear that he considered the crux of the problem was the status of the women.¹²⁷ He reported on recommendations made to the Home Policy Committee, for a new Regulation to give extra powers of summary punishment to officers in the Women's Services, and to make all members of the ATS subject to severe penalties on conviction before Courts of Summary Jurisdiction of desertion and other crimes. The main object of this proposal was to prevent desertion from the ATS. Grigg was opposed, believing it would interfere with recruiting and would 'certainly antagonise most violently that large body of opinion, well represented among women MPs, which holds that women serving in the King's uniform who take the risk of soldiers should have the status of soldiers'.¹²⁸

In Grigg's view, if it was desired to make women liable to trial and punishment for desertion, the straightforward course was to enlist them and give the King's commission to their officers. If applied and interpreted with common sense the regular Army procedure could be perfectly well adapted to women, and the whole status of the ATS would be greatly raised in its own estimation. He recognised there were difficulties, but for his part he could think of no argument that justified 'the denial of soldier status to women who do duty as soldiers under the Army Act (or most of it) and take the risks of soldiers in places of real danger'.¹²⁹

Both the Adjutant General and the Permanent Under Secretary of State for War were asked for their opinion of Sir Edward Grigg's views. At first the Adjutant General declared himself opposed to enlistment, on the grounds that it could split the corps into two

different kinds of members if it were offered to existing members of the ATS, and some refused.¹³⁰ By November 1940 he had changed his mind and conceded that enlistment would satisfy a demand from within the ATS, as well as provide powers by which members could be punished for desertion and similar offences.¹³¹

Considerable legal and military difficulties still had to be overcome. The Treasury Solicitor was of the opinion that three Acts would require amendment: The Territorial and Reserve Forces Acts; The Army Act (which would need 'substantial modifications') and the Armed Forces (Conditions of Service) Act.¹³² In addition, if women were to become officers and soldiers, there would have to be extensive amendments to King's Regulations, the Pay Warrant, Allowance Regulations and other regulations, in order to define their application to women officers and soldiers. As a preliminary step to negotiations, at the Adjutant General's request, Sir Edward Grigg set out in detail his reasons for believing that the conditions of service in the ATS demanded attention: most important was the fact that recruiting had fallen off badly, and recruits were urgently required.¹³³ The trouble was, a position of deadlock had been reached. A proposal to bring the ATS under the Army Act as officers and soldiers had met with strong objection in the Army Council, had presented some legal difficulties, and was believed by some to be fatal to better recruiting.¹³⁴ But some means of countering the disastrous effects of the Select Committee's report, and of restoring the reputation of the Service with the general public, must be found; the matter could not be ignored, as the Ministry of Labour was being pressed on the need for dilution.¹³⁵

Grigg's view of the situation was questioned by the PUS, who considered that the difficulty experienced in recruiting for the ATS was due not so much to the effect of the Select Committee's report as to the superior attraction of munitions.¹³⁶ Mr Bevin had called for half a million women, and what he could offer them in the way of training and future earnings must have been far more attractive to many than joining the ATS. Unless the government tackled the problem of woman-power in the same way as it had the problem of man-power, and obtained the authority to direct women into channels of occupation where their services were most wanted, it would not find a solution to the difficulty.

But the time had not yet arrived for the introduction of conscription for women and, in an effort to resolve the thorny issue, a Women's Corps Status Committee was appointed, with a brief 'To consider whether military status should be accorded to members of the Women's Corps of the three Services, and, if so, to make recommendations as to the legislative and other changes necessary'.¹³⁷ Grigg was the Chairman of the Committee, and representatives of both Air Ministry and Admiralty attended, but no women were invited; the PUS told Grigg that he had not included any representative of the ATS on the Committee because the Air Council had not put forward a member of the WAAF.¹³⁸ The increasing employment of women on what were described as 'virtually combatant duties' was considered by the Women's Corps Status Committee, and it was suggested that if military status were given to the women's corps, not only would a solution be provided for the difficulties raised in connection with the laws and usages of war by the employment of women performing such duties, but

also the desire for improved status expressed by the women themselves would be gratified. A proposal was submitted to the Board of Admiralty, and both Army and Air Councils, that a Defence Regulation should be drawn up to make members of the women's corps of the three services full members of the Armed Forces of the Crown. The Executive Committee of the Army Council [ECAC] agreed that there was a case for taking steps to make women beyond doubt 'members of HM Forces, in view of the increasing tendency to employ women on quasi-combatant duties, and thus regularise their position in the event of capture by the enemy'.¹³⁹

There was a further impetus for change. The report of Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert's Committee, on anti-aircraft reorganisation, had put forward proposals to utilise members of the ATS for duties of an operational nature in connection with the Air Defence of Great Britain. [ADGB].¹⁴⁰ The Joubert Committee, impressed with the need for economising manpower in the period ahead, had proposed that members of ATS should be trained and employed in a number of duties in gun operational roles, such as Track Recorders, Plotters, Teleprinter Operators, reliefs for soldiers as Fire Control Operators at gun sites and for complete Searchlight detachments. If this proposal was accepted, the services of some 30,000 women could be quickly utilised, which would ease manpower problems. On 12 March, 1941, the Army Council debated the proposal to grant women full military status, and to employ them in operational functions.¹⁴¹ If the Joubert Report recommendations were put into practice, this would mean the ultimate replacement of some 57,000 soldiers on air defence work, of whom at least 50% were definitely engaged on operational

duties. The corollary of allocating operational roles to the ATS was that those so employed must be under a tighter code of discipline than at present.

The Army Council agreed that the Joubert Committee proposals for the employment of women in operational roles should be adopted, and after approval had been granted by both the Secretary of State for War,¹⁴² and the Prime Minister,¹⁴³ the matter was put to the War Cabinet at the end of March 1941.¹⁴⁴ It was explained that under British military law members of the ATS were at present technically civilians, though in International Law they would probably be regarded as combatants under the Hague Convention if they were engaged on operational duties.¹⁴⁵ The object was to give the women's corps a fuller military status, by a Defence Regulation without legislation, which would define them as part of the Armed Forces of the Crown, and enable the Board of Admiralty, Army Council and Air Council to prescribe the extent to which the Discipline Acts of the three services should apply. If fuller military status was accorded the Women's Corps, it would be necessary to consider tightening up conditions of service so that ATS would no longer be able, without penalty, to terminate their services practically at will.

The Secretary of State for Air supported the proposals to give fuller military status to the women's corps, and was keen to adopt similar measures for the WAAF, but the First Lord of the Admiralty told the War Cabinet that the Board of Admiralty could see no reason for change as far as the WRNS were concerned.¹⁴⁶ In the circumstances, the granting of full military status to the Women's Corps must be regarded not so much as a recognition of their true role

(and no one appears to have attempted to define what they meant by 'military status', but it was certainly not synonymous with being combatant) as an expedient to gain certain ends. 'Military status' was bestowed on women so that the authorities might extend their roles to include tasks that might otherwise be regarded as unsuitably dangerous, and in order to introduce sterner disciplinary measures, and stop desertion'¹⁴⁷. As it was to apply to all personnel, not just operational [i.e. combatant] it could equally have applied to the WRNS; it was considered unnecessary because the WRNS had no problem recruiting all the women they needed.'¹⁴⁸

As for the women themselves, when the Secretary of State for War enquired as to the ATS reaction to the proposals for their fuller military status and operational employment, he was told it was 'favourable', provided compassionate release from the Service continued to be granted on reasonably generous lines, and it was widely believed that the new proposals would have a stimulating effect on the Service as a whole.'¹⁴⁹

The War Cabinet agreed in principle that fuller military status should be given to all ATS personnel, and that they should be employed as required on the operational roles described. The same principle could be applied to both WRNS and WAAF if that was desired by the Board of Admiralty or the Air Council.'¹⁵⁰ The parliamentary Counsel was asked to draft a Defence Regulation, to be put to the Home Policy Committee of the War Cabinet before the Easter recess, but preoccupation with the budget caused delay, and the Army Council agreed that in the circumstances the Secretary of State for War should make a statement to the House of Commons before it rose.'¹⁵¹

On 10 April, 1941, Captain Margesson, the Secretary of State for War, told the House of Commons that the ATS had proved so valuable to the Army in the replacement of men that the Government had decided to increase its numbers greatly, and enlarge the range of duties which it performed.¹⁵² Members of the service were already discharging important functions connected with the air defence of Great Britain as well as with the rest of the Forces at home 'and these are of a character which renders it desirable that the volunteers performing them should be definitely declared members of the Armed Forces of the Crown. The whole Service will accordingly be given full military status'. Women would 'of course, be employed only on work for which they have a special aptitude, but the House should know that such work includes duties at searchlight and gun stations'.¹⁵³ The Service would remain a women's Service under the general direction of women, and the disciplinary Code of the Army would be applied to it only in so far as the wider responsibilities now envisaged necessitated.

Margesson explained that members of the ATS had enrolled on the specific understanding that on active service they would be subject to military law, and to such penalties as might then be prescribed, so they were not being subjected to conditions inconsistent with the terms on which they had enrolled, and he had 'every reason to believe they will welcome their new status'. There would be no change in the Army Act governing the discipline of the ATS, but rather, parts of the Act applicable to Women's service would be applied. Similar measures would be introduced in respect of the WAAF, which gave full Air Force status to that organisation, but the disciplinary code of the RAF would be applied only as appropriate and necessary.¹⁵⁴

An *Order-in-Council*, signed by the King, appeared on 25 April: *The Emergency Powers Defence (Women's Forces) Regulations*, 25 April 1941 stated that members of ATS and WAAF (together with nurses and doctors) were to become members of the Armed Forces of the Crown.¹⁵⁵ The Ministry of Labour had proposed that 'Viceroy's' Commissions instead of King's Commissions should be introduced into the women's services, but the War Office opposed the suggestion, and at the second meeting of the Women's Corps Status Committee it was agreed to recommend that King's Commissions should be conferred on officers of the women's forces and they should be granted powers of command, not only over inferior officers and other ranks of their own Services, but also over any male soldiers and airmen who might be placed under their orders.¹⁵⁶

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IV. THE LAST ACTS

The change in status did not produce the anticipated increase in applications to the ATS, and, despite a press campaign, by 1 May 1941 only 2,000 women had filled up coupons for service with the Corps.¹⁵⁷ The Ministry of Information instigated a survey to find out why women were not joining the ATS.¹⁵⁸ The results are informative, if unsurprising: the influence of relatives and friends on decisions about volunteering for the services was apparent, and there was evidence of discouragement by men in the Forces. Of those who completed the questionnaires, many more expressed objections to joining the ATS rather than the other two corps because of the 'type of person' they would have to live with.¹⁵⁹ A tiny number complained that the Services 'turned women into men', and there were complaints

about living conditions, the uniform (especially that of the ATS), too much drill and discipline, and insufficient pay and allowances.¹⁶⁰

In general, though, expressions of appreciation of the Women's Services were more common than complaints.¹⁶¹ Almost 50% of those who were asked why they had joined the ATS claimed 'patriotic reasons' as their motive, though the honesty of this response is open to doubt, as the survey noted, for it was the kind of answer that would be regarded as being most acceptable. The evidence of the survey suggests that ATS members did suffer from a strong sense of inferiority, and many believed that they were held in low esteem by the public.¹⁶² A number had suffered unpleasant or humiliating experiences, and from the beginning, the ATS had the reputation of being the drab and unglamorous Service: 'the legion of Cinderellas, domestic workers of low degree among whom one expected, and got, a low degree of morality'.¹⁶³

However unfair this was, the ATS had failed to attract sufficient recruits, and it was with this in mind that the War Cabinet discussed the introduction of compulsory service for women.¹⁶⁴ Women could already be compelled to take specified employment in industry; what had to be decided was whether this principle should be extended to the Services. The Minister of Labour was convinced that no other method would suffice; indirect pressure was already being exercised to the fullest extent and, if it were carried any further, there would be complaints of undue pressure.¹⁶⁵ Both the Secretary of State for Air and the First Lord of the Admiralty considered that there would be strong objections to compulsion for women amongst men in the Navy and the Air Force; the Secretary of State for War said there was no

evidence of any such feelings in the Army, at least against the compulsory recruitment of unmarried women.

One difficulty was how to define the types of combatant service which women should *not* be required to undertake, except as volunteers. It was not easy to draw a distinction between service in different branches of the auxiliary corps; for example, many women in the WAAF employed at stations which were liable to heavy air attack were in as much danger as women on gun sites. A solution to this dilemma was agreed: the test should not be the danger to which the women were exposed, but rather, the nature of the work which they were to undertake. No difficulty was anticipated, provided women were not called upon to undertake service 'which involved participation in the use of lethal weapons unless they specifically volunteered therefor'.¹⁶⁶

The War Cabinet concluded that new legislation should be introduced, imposing on all persons between the ages of 18 and 60 an obligation to undertake some form of national service. Within that general framework it approved in principle 'the introduction of legislation imposing compulsory national service upon women, within age limits to be specified, for the purpose of obtaining sufficient women for service in the Auxiliary Services and for Civil Defence'.¹⁶⁷

The scheme should include certain provisions; for example, on being compulsorily recruited into the Auxiliary Services or Civil Defence services women would receive the same protection and safeguards as men subject to compulsory military service; married women would not be called up for these services; no women would be entered for combatant service (i.e. service which involved participation in the use of

lethal weapons) unless they specifically volunteered for it, and, as far as practicable, women called up under the scheme should be employed in the neighbourhood of their homes. Legislation on the above lines should be introduced without further consultation with representatives of the political parties, though ample opportunity must be allowed during the passage of the Bill through parliament 'for the formation and expression of opinion in regard to the scheme'.¹⁶⁰

The National Service (No. 2) Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on 2 December, and became law on 18 December, 1941.¹⁶¹

Conscription was extended to women from December 1941 until January 1947, though after November 1944 few women were called up.¹⁷⁰

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In an effort to reassure public opinion, during the passage of the National Service (No 2) Bill the Minister of Labour and National Service gave an undertaking that the question of amenities and other facilities for women in the Auxiliary Services would be reviewed immediately by himself and Ministers of the Service Departments. A proposal to set up a committee composed of Parliamentary Secretaries to the Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry and Ministry of Labour and National Services was rejected by the House of Commons. A more acceptable alternative was announced in February 1942: Violet Markham was appointed Chairman of a Committee 'to enquire into and report on the amenities and welfare conditions in the three Women's Services and to make recommendations'.¹⁷¹

The Markham Committee produced a full and fascinating report, which covered everything from accommodation, selection and training of officers, general morale and standards of conduct, to a strongly

worded recommendation on the need for innovative educational facilities, in what it regarded as a unique opportunity to expand horizons provided by the unfortunate circumstances of the war.¹⁷² The future of the Women's Services was considered by the Committee because it believed that uncertainty was affecting the recruitment of young women from the professional classes, and its members had 'agreed on every side that the rapid and haphazard demobilisation of the last war, which was made without due regard to the re-entry of men and women into civilian employment, must not be allowed to recur'.¹⁷³ It was acknowledged that adjustment between the claims of the sexes would be intricate and difficult, but still, 'the claim of the women to just and generous treatment when the time comes is one no Government can overlook...the nation has found new riches in this great development of skilled capacity created by the war'.¹⁷⁴ Women might simply want to go home at the end of the war, but if the Women's Services were broken up it would be a sad waste of resources. The question of whether a nucleus of Women's Corps should be kept in being on a peace footing after the war was 'one of high policy beyond the limits of our terms of reference', but the Committee expressed its hope that when the time came, demobilisation would take place with due regard for the tasks ahead and that there would be opportunity for the auxiliaries in the world left devastated by war.

The Markham Committee Report created concern for the future of the women's services, and from this time, despite delays and haggling over the details, the retention of some kind of women's corps after the war ended was never seriously in doubt. Committees were set up for the purpose of investigating how to proceed.¹⁷⁵ A Sub-Committee

set up in 1945 looked back to the 1914 - 18 war, and concluded that the disbandment of the WAAC had meant there had been no satisfactory nucleus on which to base the ATS.¹⁷⁶ The only semi-trained candidates had been either ex-members of the WAAC, who, after twenty years of civilian life, were out of touch not only with the modern Army but also with the needs and aspirations of the youth it was essential to recruit, or members of what it described as 'quasi-official women's organisations' - FANY, Women's Legion and Emergency Service. These, because of their purely voluntary status, had evolved organisations of which they were justly proud, but which were not necessarily what the Army required. Even more important: 'The Army itself had become unused to the idea of a female element and many cherished traditions and ideals, both of women as such and their place in a hitherto purely masculine organisation, had to be overcome'.¹⁷⁷ This was the background to the difficulties which had faced the ATS during its formation, and it could not be regarded as a fully established organisation until 1943, nearly four years after its inception. It was concluded that a permanent nucleus of ATS should be incorporated into the peace-time Army to provide a basis for immediate and rapid expansion within the Army of 'Women's Service' when necessary, with a high proportion of officers and non-commissioned officers.¹⁷⁸

In 1946 the Defence Committee of the Cabinet invited the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry to put forward proposals on the ultimate future of the women's services in the forces, and they reiterated the view that experience had shown that lack of manpower was one of the strict limitations on the country's capacity to wage a major war.¹⁷⁹ Certainly, in a future war there would be a similar, if

not a greater, need for women in the services, and the three defence ministries were convinced of the necessity for maintaining regular women's forces in peacetime, despite the inevitable expense. They urged the Defence Committee to agree to the establishment of permanent women's corps, and to bring the women's services of the Army and RAF fully under military law, while the question of making the WRNS subject to the Naval Discipline Act should be examined further. The Defence Committee agreed that the women's services should become a permanent feature of the post-war military services,¹⁸⁰ but it was not until nearly two years later, after they had been subject to yet more committee investigations,¹⁸¹ that Shinwell, the Secretary of State for War, formally submitted a request for permission to raise a Corps.¹⁸² After Royal approval, the Bill became law on 1 February 1949.

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V. 'ANNIE, GET YOUR GUN'?

The role and status of service women in wartime was brought up for discussion while the Bill to provide for a permanent women's corps for the army was under consideration. Mary Tyrwhitt, Director of the ATS [DATS], explained to the Adjutant General the reason for her concern:

The basic function of the soldier, whatever his trade, is that of a fighting man; to this end every soldier undergoes elementary weapon training and is capable in the last resort of being used as a fighting unit. The function of the woman, however, is that of a substitute for the man in his trade or employment only. In the last resort she has no defensive role in her own right.¹⁸³

During the 1939 - 45 war the position of women in the services had been ignored because of the essential temporariness of the ATS, and of the great need of the Army for additional pairs of hands, but

it was necessary to establish the WRAC on a more positive foundation. The experience of an ATS officer during the war illustrated the lack of direction in the matter: Tyrwhitt reported that in the Orders of Battle for Local Defence the ATS had been variously called upon to render first aid under instructions of the Medical Officer in charge; to defend HQ with their own weapons under command of DAAG, and to take shelter with the civilian population. Even if the WRAC did not go forth to meet the enemy, given the speed, range and methods of modern warfare, the enemy was quite likely to come to the WRAC. The manner in which women could usefully contribute to active defence must be considered, as should the question of whether or not women should learn how to use small arms as defensive weapons.¹⁸⁴

In these days when the enemy may be largely uncivilised, I feel that most women would rather put their trust in their own skill with a rifle than in the finer feelings of an invading army. It might also relieve a Commander's mind (and his available manpower) if the women on his establishment were capable of defending themselves instead of being dependant upon his few men for their protection.¹⁸⁵

Essentially, it was necessary to define the basic function of a woman in the Army as soldier, for in that way 'her sphere of activity, and consequently her place in the Army will be fully established, her function in face of the enemy would not be left to the imagination of the local Commander, and she could be regarded as an asset at all times, instead of becoming a liability in the last resort'.¹⁸⁶

Other views on the role and status of service women in war were sought,¹⁸⁷ but the DATS was informed that though her move to define the precise status of WRAC personnel was welcomed, and it was recognised that a clear definition of the function of the WRAC on its inclusion in the Regular Army would avoid misapprehensions and

otherwise inevitable undesirable allegations, as far as weapon training was concerned:

It would be distasteful to the Army and the British public generally that women should be compulsorily trained in the use of arms. However emancipated women may become, they can never cease to be regarded as a liability in Action, and while no Regulation would prevent a Commander arming his women for their own protection in the last resort, I do NOT recommend that women should be given compulsory weapon-training in peacetime.¹⁸⁸

However, it was agreed that the matter needed further consideration, and it was discussed at a meeting in November, 1948, where it was pointed out that the revised Geneva Convention, due to be signed the following year, would probably recognise that women could be made prisoners of war.¹⁸⁹ There were no legal restrictions on the employment of women in the Army, and it was likely that in future only the medical services would retain protected status.¹⁹⁰ But it was anticipated that there would be certain powers which would not sign the new Convention, on whose treatment of women no reliance could be placed, and the DATS insisted that in the circumstances, the WRAC should receive compulsory training in the use of personal weapons, in order that they should feel capable of defending themselves if necessary. Others were unconvinced, and the debate continued after the Bill introducing permanent women's corps had become law.

In May, 1949, a paper was circulated, reiterating the reasons for defining the role of the WRAC in war, and emphasising that such restrictions as existed were a matter of *policy*, not law; there was nothing in the new Act to prevent the raising of a female force for combatant duties.¹⁹¹ In neither domestic nor international law was there any definition of what constituted 'combatant duty'. The operation of instruments directing the firing of AA guns had hitherto

been regarded as non-combatant, and members of the ATS had been barred only from the use of personal arms and the actual firing of guns and other weapons. The ECAC was to be asked to approve a recommendation which stated that if it was impossible to prevent members of the WRAC from coming face to face with the enemy, all ranks should be permitted to defend themselves against attack, and would be issued with personal weapons for that purpose.

Predictably, the DWRAC¹⁹² supported the views in the circulated paper, but one indignant response insisted that an alternative proposal, that the WRAC should be neither armed nor trained in the use of arms, should be incorporated into any report that was made:

With the possible exception of those manning AA guns sites, in which GOC AA Command should be invited to express his opinion, I consider that it would be psychologically unsound and an expensive waste of equipment, ammunition and training time to train women in the use of personal arms. The fact that 'little Olga' is trained to kill and prides herself in the number of notches cut on her revolverbutt is no reason why we, too, should cry 'Annie get your gun'. It is still the soldier's duty to protect his women folk whatever they are wearing. Even in these days when war means total war let us at least retain that degree of chivalry.¹⁹³

A revised paper, which attempted to present a balanced comparison between the support for and objection to the arming of women, failed to convince those already opposed, while for her part, the DWRAC insisted that most women would infinitely prefer shooting someone to being raped by them.¹⁹⁴ The Director of Finance in the War Office told the DPA that 'the whole idea of arming women reminds me of Dr Johnson's strictures on a woman's preaching which he said was like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not well done; but you are surprised to find it done at all'.¹⁹⁵

The official record does not reveal the views of the ECAC on the subject, but the proposal to train women to bear arms was obviously rejected: 31 years later women in the forces in Britain were still not being trained to use firearms, even in self-defence. The 1980 Defence White Paper, stressing the increasing importance of the reserves, including the women's services, suggests that 'if we are to make the fullest use of women in Services, we must reconsider and perhaps revise our traditional attitude to allowing them to bear arms'.¹⁹⁶ In an increasing number of countries women in the forces were being trained in the use of fire-arms for self defence, or for certain limited base defence tasks in an emergency.¹⁹⁷ As long as Britain did not move in that direction, employment opportunities for members of the WRAC could not be 'widened forward of Corps rear boundary', and the WRAF could not be detailed for certain duties in an emergency which would permit greater flexibility in the use of RAF personnel.¹⁹⁸

The White Paper also points out that the Geneva Conventions make no distinction between men and women, so that both sexes (other than those engaged in medical duties) must already be considered to be 'combatant'; the Government still held to the view that for the present, there could be 'no question' of the members of the Women's Services engaging in combat, or being armed for any duties other than in exercises of emergency or war, though within that general limitation it was considering how far it would now be desirable to go.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 11 [Pages 340 to 388]

1. John Terraine, *The First World War 1914 - 1918* (1984 edition), p. 183.
2. Barrie Pitt, *1918 The Last Act* (1984 edition), p. 268.
3. McDonagh, M., *In London During the Great War*, 1935, p. 327, quoted in Marwick, *The Deluge*, op. cit., p. 257.
4. Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (1979 edition), p. 459.
5. Marwick, *The Deluge*, op. cit., p. 260 - 1.
6. *The Autobiography of Margot Asquith* (1985 edition), p. 324.
7. Ibid.
8. Notes on Conference held in AG XI, 13 November 1918, PRO WO162/34.
9. 2 November 1918, PRO AIR 2/94/CW9740.
10. 62nd Meeting (of Air Council), Item III, 19 November 1918, PRO AIR 2/94/CW9740.
11. *The WAAC Magazine*, January 1919, IWM Army 3²⁶/11.
12. Hannah K. Alton, 'Friendship', *ibid.*, p. 8.
13. *Daily Mail*, 10 December 1918, 'Peace-Time Waacs'.
14. Ibid.
15. E.E. Curtis, 980, Late Worker, QMAAC att. HQ Abbeville, Camp III, *Old Comrades' Association Gazette* 6, December 1920, IWM ARMY 3²⁶/16.
16. Norah Atkinson, *ibid.*, p. 6. Winifred Holtby was similarly lyrical about the camp hidden in the orchard at Huchenneville, where she was hostel forewoman. Winifred Holtby, 'The Forest Unit', typescript, Winifred Holtby Archives, Hull Central Library.
17. Unit Administrator, South Norwood Hill, QMAAC to Controller, Eastern Command, 9 November 1918, IWM Army 3¹⁹/4.
18. Ibid.
19. Senior Unit Administrator, QMAAC, Dover Garrison, 30 October 1918, IWM Army 3¹⁹/4.

20. Letter from M. Munro Mathews, late D.A. QMAAC, 24 October 1920, *Old Comrades' Association Gazette* 6, op cit., p. 6.
21. Ibid.
22. K. Furse to Lady Rhondda, 8 December 1918. BUFP 196/9/C2.
23. Ibid.
24. 'Memorandum on Formation of Domestic Service Corps for Employment of Discharged members of the WRNS, QMAAC and WRAF', 11 December 1918, BUFP 196/9/B1.
25. Katharine Furse, 'Domestic Service and a possible solution', undated typescript, BUFP 196/9/B41.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. *The Times*, 19 December 1918.
29. *The Morning Post*, 25 January 1919.
30. Ibid.
31. Letter to Editor from Lady Londonderry, Director General of the Women's Legion HQ, *The Times*, 6 March 1919.
32. Memorandum from K. Furse, 31 January 1919, BUFP 196/9/C66. Mrs Burleigh Leach told Furse that she thought that Lady Londonderry's proposed scheme would satisfactorily cover the problem.
33. Interview by George A. Wade of Mrs Burleigh Leach, Chief Controller of QMAAC, Ref. No. 961, Sub. Cat. D382, WRAC Museum, Guildford.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. See, for example, D. Thom, *The Ideology of Women's Work*, Introduction, and p. 232. Thom questions the views of contemporaries such as Mrs Fawcett and Mary Macarthur, who considered that the First World War was emancipating in its effects upon women. She records that women's participation in industry began to come under attack even before the war was officially over, that: 'the only persistent change was in women's participation in clerical labour, which fitted well with the ideological divide of clean/dirty, light/heavy, sexually segregated/unrespectable, occupations'. See also M. Kozak, op. cit., Chapter 9, Demobilisation; Heller Hogg, op. cit., Chapter 21.; Braybon, *Women War Workers*, Chapter 7; Braybon and Summerville, Chapter 7; Marwick, *Women at War*, pp. 162 - 3.

37. Cubitt, War Office, to Secretary, Treasury, 3 December 1918, PRO T1/13399/12303/19.
38. A. Waterfield to W. Barstow, 7 December 1918, PRO T1/12299/12302/19; C. Harris to W. Barstow, 9 January 1918, PRO T1/12299/12309/19.
39. Ibid.
40. A. Waterfield to W. Barstow, 11 January 1919, PRO T1/13399/12302/19.
41. Cubitt, War Office, to Secretary, Treasury, 17 January 1919, *ibid.*
42. Ibid.
43. Sir C. Harris to G.L. Barstow, Treasury, PRO T1/12299/12303/19.
44. Chief Controller QMAAC to Controller QMAAC, 9 January 1919, IWM Army 3¹⁴/115.
45. 12 January 1919, IWM Army 3²²/2.
46. Cubitt, War Office to Secretary, Treasury, 20 February 1919, PRO T1/12299/12303/19.
47. Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, Commandant WRAF to DMGP, 1 February 1919, PRO AIR 2/94/CW9740.
48. Air Council, 81st Meeting, Para VIII, Future of WRAF, 18 March 1919. PRO AIR 6/14. At that time members of WRAF had a civil contract, strengthened by Para 42(c) of DORA for discipline.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Air Commodore, Director of Training and Organisation to General Officers Commanding, 11 August 1919. PRO AIR 2/94/CW9740/02. The matter was supposed to be considered further by the Air Council, but there is no evidence that it did so.
52. W.S.C. to Secretary Air, Minute 17, 15 August 1919, PRO AIR 2/94/CW9740.
53. Telegram 'Phonogram' CW9740 to Inspector Gen. RAF, Winchester, 23 August 1919, *ibid.*
54. Brian Bond writes of this time that within a few months of the ending of the war, the huge Army that had grown up, and its industrial base at home, 'rapidly disappeared like some insubstantial vision...What in retrospect is somewhat surprising...is that so little effort was made, even on paper, to garner the lessons of unpreparedness in 1914 and of the unprecedented national war effort that followed; much less to

preserve the administrative and industrial basis for a future mobilisation on a similar scale. In an atmosphere of war weariness, economic disturbance, and disillusionment with the fruits of victory such forethought was quite simply impossible'. Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford 1980), pp. 6 - 7.

55. Hankey Private Papers, 25 August 1919; 20 July 1918 - 3 December 1922, 1/5. Churchill College Cambridge. Also see Bond, *British Military Policy*, op. cit., pp. 23 - 5, for discussion of Hankey's role. The 'Ten Year Rule' was based on the supposition that war against a major power lay at least ten more years ahead. Bond describes British defence policy from August 1919 as 'broadly based upon the initially secret and subsequently notorious Ten Year Rule'. Ibid., p. 23.
56. Hankey Private Papers, 25 August 1919, op. cit. Winston Churchill became Secretary of State for War and Air on 10 January 1919. Bond, op. cit., p. 21.
57. *The Times*, 28 August 1919.
58. Ibid.
59. AMWO No. 1109 and 1110, 7 October 1919, PRO AIR 2/132/CW14899.
60. General Routine Orders 753 to QMAACorps, 20 November 1919, IWM Army 3¹²/15.
61. WRNS Acquaint No. 268, 31 October 1919, IWM WRNS 3/266.
62. ACI 280, 4 May, 1920.
63. *Report of the Women's Reserve Committee*, Precis No. 1060, 13 December 1920, PRO WO163/26.
64. H.J. Creedy, 'Precis for Army Council, No. 1041, Reorganisation of Voluntary Aid Detachments. Report of Major-General Burnett-Hitchcock's Committee, PRO WO32/10075. The other members of the *Women's Reserve Committee* included Miss C. Ellis, from Women's Legion; Dame Merial Talbat of the Women's Land Army, and Mrs E.F. Stewart, Women's Forage Corps. Ibid.
65. *Report of the Women's Reserve Committee*, op. cit.
66. Ibid.
67. Adjutant General, 10 January 1921, PRO WO32/10649. The Adjutant General advocated a Reserve organised on a Territorial Force basis.
68. Quartermaster-General, 9 February 1921, ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.

71. Financial Secretary, C.H., 18 February 1921, *ibid*.
72. 281st Meeting of Army Council, Item 7, 'Formation of a Women's Reserve', 2 June 1921. PRO WO163/26. The meeting was attended by the Secretary of State for War, the Under-Secretary, the Finance Member, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, and the Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
73. Lady Londonderry to the Editor, *The Times*, 9 December 1933.
74. FANY, Army Order 94, 1927.
75. Army Order 180, 1927.
76. *The Times*, 9 December 1933, *op. cit*.
77. *The Times*, 15 December 1933.
78. *Ibid*.
79. According to Winifred Holtby, in 1936 Commandant Allen's Women's Auxiliary Corps was offering women training in Aircraft and Marksmanship. Winifred Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation*, 1936, p. 164.
80. Draft Scheme for a Women's Reserve, Minute 3 (1231870), PRO WO32/10650.
81. Admiralty to PS to Secretary of State for War, 24 January 1934; H.J. Creedy, War Office to Lady Londonderry, PRO WO32/10650.
82. The object of the new Women's Legion was 'The voluntary enrolment and training of women in peace to supplement the services of the Navy, Army and Air Force and their auxiliary services in emergency. To include personnel for light transport and ambulance driving, air ambulance service, protective and reserve duties in air defence of the civil population, clerical work, cooking and general duties in relief or assistance of the forces of the Crown and their auxiliaries'. Lady Londonderry to Sir H. Creedy, War Office, 23 July 1934, PRO WO32/10650. See also H. Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
83. Lady Londonderry told Creedy that the real objection FANY had to being associated with the BRC was because the Honorary Colonel of FANY Ambulance Car Corps, Major General Evan Gibb, feared that the BRC would 'eat them up', and they would cease to exist. Lady Londonderry to Creedy, 31 July 1934, PRO WO32/10650. In November Major General Evan Gibb informed the Quarter-Master General that FANY was prepared to relinquish its full title and join the new Reserve of women (though it would remain as a corps, and retain its existing entity within the new organisation) if it could be assured that it would continue to receive assistance and facilities on the same scale hitherto granted them annually by the War Office. Evan Gibb to General

- Sir F. Ready, Quarter-Master General to the Forces, 21 November 1934, PRO WO32/10650.
84. See R. Patinou, Deputy Under-Secretary, War Office, 7 December 1934, PRO WO32/10650.
 85. Creedy, War Office to Sir Oswyn Murray, 11 January 1935, PRO WO32/10650.87; Rt Hon. Sir Bolton M. Eyres-Monsell MP (Admiralty) to Rt Hon. Viscount Hailsham, *ibid.*
 86. *Ibid.*
 87. Hailsham, WO to RH Sir Bolton M. Eyres-Monsell, (42A) 20 February 1935; Eyres-Monsell to Hailsham, (48A) 1 March 1935; Hailsham to Eyres-Monsell, 4 March 1935, *ibid.* It was agreed that submission to the Cabinet should be made by the Air Ministry; thus Lady Londonderry's husband was allotted the task of preparing a draft paper about the Women's Legion, in which he described the organisation as non-military, without uniform, and with the purpose of organising and training of women who would be placed at the disposal of the Government for non-combatant service in war. Londonderry, Air Ministry, copy of Draft to Viscount Hailsham, WO, 15 April 1935. *ibid.*
 88. Hankey to Sir Herbert Creedy, 4 July 1935; H.J. Creedy to Col. Sir Maurice Hankey, (78B) 6 July 1935; Creedy to Hankey, (83A) 27 July 1935, PRO WO32/10650. Ramsay MacDonald, suffering from long-failing health and waning political influence, was replaced by Stanley Baldwin, who became Prime Minister on 7 June 1935. It was a general signal for a reshuffle; Londonderry was replaced at the Air Ministry by Cunliffe-Lister, and Viscount Halifax took over from Viscount Hailsham as Secretary of State for War. Eyres-Monsell remained First Lord of the Admiralty for another year.
 89. Sub Committee on Women's Reserve, PRO CAB 57/18.
 90. Printed Report, *Sub Committee on Women's Reserve*, 12 May 1936, PRO WO32/4520.
 91. Clearly, they wished to keep all options open.
 92. Lady Londonderry had written to Sir Herbert Creedy at the War Office at the beginning of 1936, telling him that she had informed Hankey that after the expenditure of £2,000 and a wait of over two years for something to materialise, she now felt that her Women's Legion must close down. Lady Londonderry to Sir Herbert Creedy, (95A), 22 February 1936, PRO WO32/10650.
 93. In February 1936 Helen Gwynne-Vaughan had written to the Secretary at the WO and to the Air Ministry, asking that the authorities provide drill instructors and lectures for the Officers' Training Section of Lady Londonderry's Reserve. Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, op. cit., pp. 77 - 80. It is not clear whether her overtures had the approval of Lady Londonderry or not.

94. Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
95. One of the trainees was Jane Forbes, who became Director of the WAAF - Air Commandant Jane Trefusis Forbes.
96. Duff Cooper, Secretary of State for War, to RH Hon. Ernest Brown, MP, Minister of Labour, 27 April 1937, PRO WO32/4502.
97. With the exception of nurses, and women of high academic standing or specialist qualifications, who would be supplied independently. Ernest Brown, Ministry of Labour to RH A. Duff-Cooper, WO (47A), 28 May 1937, *ibid.*
98. Before Duff-Cooper could respond, there was yet another change at the WO. In May, Baldwin retired as PM, and Chamberlain took over, and Hore-Belisha replaced Duff-Cooper as Secretary of State for War. The new Minister wrote to Brown soon after taking office, telling him that from the WO's viewpoint, Brown's proposal that the Ministry of Labour would take over from the various women's voluntary organisations was quite acceptable, and that they intended to write to the various women's organisations, informing them of the position. S.D. Roseway to T.S. Chegwiddden, 18 June 1937, PRO WO32/4502.
99. Lady Loch, in charge of the 'Flying Section' of the new Women's Legion, had put forward a suggestion in the summer of 1936 that a small number of suitable women should be selected by the Women's Legion and given a short period of training for supervisory work in the Forces, with the idea that they would form a nucleus for subsequent enlargement, should the need arise. Lady Loch had no connection with Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan's Emergency Service. *Women's Reserve*, typed notes (42A) sent by Duff Cooper to Ernest Brown, *ibid.*
100. H. Knox, Adjutant General to Helen Gwynne-Vaughan (58B) 4 August 1937; H. Knox to The Lady Loch (53A) 4 August 1937, *ibid.*
101. Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
102. Lady Loch to Sir Harry Knox, 6 August 1937; Lady Londonderry to Adjutant General Sir H. Knox, (63B) 11 August 1937; Lady Londonderry to Hore-Belisha, 11 August 1937 (63A), PRO WO32/4502.
103. Lady Londonderry to Hore-Belisha, 11 August 1937, *ibid.*
104. *Ibid.* In her letter to the Adjutant General (11 August 1937, *op. cit.*) Lady Londonderry claimed that she had been asked privately by the head of VAD to oppose Sir Auckland Geddes's proposals at a big Conference on woman power. The chief proposal was the 'Common Portal' - that all recruits, even the highest ranks, must pass through Labour Exchanges. Lady Londonderry boasted that she had opposed the proposals 'with complete success' and the whole scheme was scrapped. See *Chapter 8*.

105. Lady Londonderry to Hore-Belisha, 11 August 1937, op. cit.
106. Draft, Minute 69, 12 October 1937, WO32/4502; Informal Army Council (IAC) 'Supply of Women for Supervisory Powers in War' (73A), Precis No. 5, 6 November 1937, PRO WO32/4502.
107. Informal Army Council (9A), 'Supply of Supervisory Posts in War', PRO WO32/10651 (and 6 November 1937, Precis No. 5, op. cit.).
108. In September Helen Gwynne-Vaughan called on Knox, asking if women could be made subject to the Army Act and not treated as camp followers, and also for her organisation, 'Emergency Service', to be formally recognised by inclusion in the Army List, a recognition already accorded to the Women's Transport Service (FANY) and the Women's Legion Motor Division. Adjutant General Knox to DRO, Minute 1, 23 September 1937, PRO WO32/10651.
109. Item 3 from Proceedings of 12th Meeting of IAC, 13 December 1937, *ibid.* A.E. Widdows, WO to Helen Gwynne Vaughan, 17 December 1937, *ibid.* The conditions stipulated that the organisation would be available for service when required in a national emergency; that it would agree to be absorbed into any Women's Reserve which it might be decided to organise at a future date; that members would agree to serve individually, and not insist on being taken over as a unit and that there would be no financial assistance, either direct or indirect, from public funds.
110. Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 21 December 1937, *ibid.* Official recognition of Emergency Service was promulgated in Army Order 11 of 1938.
111. Note by AG1(b) Captain J. Patrick, 'Formation of a Women's Reserve in Peace to embrace all branches of the Army', (1A) 22 December 1937, PRO WO32/10652.
112. QMG, Minute 4, 19 December, 1933, PRO WO32/10650.
113. Liddel had replaced General Knox as Adjutant General. Adjutant General to PUS, Minute 6, 14 January 1938, PRO WO32/10652.
114. H. Creedy, WO to Sec. of CID, 6 April 1938, *ibid.*
115. Extract from Minutes of 19th IAC, Item 5, Raising a Women's Reserve, 6 April 1938, *ibid.* 8th Meeting of CCAC, Minute 18, Conclusions, 13 April 1938, *ibid.*
116. Deputy Director General Territorial Army to Director General Territorial Army, Minute 19, 25 April 1938, *ibid.*
117. Record of a Meeting held at the WO to consider the formation of a Women's Auxiliary Corps (27A), *ibid.*
118. Creedy, Minute 38, 28 May 1938, *ibid.*

119. DDGTA to US of S, Minute 44, 24 June 1938, *ibid.* Lady Londonderry to Hore-Belisha, (45A) 22 June 1938, *ibid.*
120. Historical Background to ATS, Memorandum by DPS, PRO WO32/13160.
121. U. Mason, *The Wrens 1917 - 1977. A History of the Women's Royal Naval Service* (Reading 1977).
122. *Yorkshire Evening News*, 15 April 1939, BUFP DM190/2.
123. History and Organisation of Women's Services in Peace, Cabinet Paper, D.O. (46) 63, 8 May 1946, PRO WO32/13160.
124. J.B. Abraham, Air Ministry, to Miss J. Trefusis Forbes, 30 June 1939, WATSON WATT, Box 9, AC72/17, RAF/Hendon.
125. Select Committee on National Expenditure to S. Redmond, WO, 30 April 1940, PRO WO32/10030.
126. *Twelfth Report from the Selection Committee on National Expenditure, House of Commons*, HMSO, BM Official Publications, Reports/Committees 1939 - 40 (111) p. 561.
127. E. Grigg to S of S, Minute 1, 20 July 1940, PRO WO32/10040.
128. *Ibid.*
129. *Ibid.*
130. From AG and PUS to S of S for War, Minute 3, 30 July 1940, *ibid.*
131. Adjutant General to Civil Member, Minute 1, 5 November 1940, PRO WO32/10031.
132. *Ibid.*
133. Minute 2, 7 November 1940; 'Secret', AE 81, Army Council - Recruiting in ATS, Memo by Civil Member, 10 December 1940, *ibid.*
134. *Ibid.*
135. The report to which Grigg referred was the *Select Committee Report on National Expenditure*, 21 August 1940, *op. cit.*
136. 5A AE81, Recruiting in ATS, Note by PUS, WO32/10031.
137. *Women's Corps Status Committee*, Minutes of 1st Meeting, 18 February 1941, *ibid.*
138. PUS to CM, Minute 13, 2 January 1941, *ibid.*
139. 22A Extract from Minutes of 5th Meeting of ECAC held 21 February 1941, *ibid.*

140. 'Secret' ATS Status and Future Employment. S of S(W.P. (41) 72). PRO CAB 66/15 and 29A PRO WO32/10031 (Revised Draft Cabinet).
141. Extract from Minutes of 4th Meeting of Army Council held 12 March 1941, PRO WO32/10031.
142. To PM from DM (Margesson), (26A) 15 March 1941, *ibid.*
143. Minute 26, W.S.C. 15 March 1941, *ibid.*
144. War Cabinet Conclusions 33(41) 31 March 1941, CAB 65/18.
145. ATS Status and Future Employment (W.P. (41) 72), *op. cit.*
146. War Cabinet Conclusions, 31 March 1941, *op. cit.*
147. According to the Director of Personnel Services at the War Office, the chief purpose of granting military status to the women's services was to stop desertion. Women's Corps Status Committee, Minutes of 2nd Meeting, 23 April 1941, PRO WO32/10031.
148. There certainly were dangerous jobs in the WRNS; for example, the writer's aunt was in charge of a boat in Portsmouth Harbour, which flew barrage balloons; the harbour was frequently bombed.
149. Army Council Secretariat (40B) AC Minutes of 5th Meeting, 7 April 1941, PRO WO32/10031.
150. War Cabinet 33(41), 31 March 1941, *op. cit.*
151. G.W. Lambert (AUS) (41B) to Parl. Council, PRO WO32/10031; War Cabinet Home Policy Committee, ATS - Revised Status, (39A) 8 April 1941, *ibid.*
152. 370 H.C. Deb 5s, 10 April 1941, Cols. 1699 - 1701.
153. *Ibid.*
154. Captain Harold Balfour, US of S for War, *ibid.*
155. Statutory Rules and Orders, 1941, No. 581, Emergency Powers (Defence) Women's Forces, The Defence (Women's Forces) Regs. 1941, 25 April 1941, *ibid.*
156. As a commission is the document conferring rank on an officer, a Viceroy's commission would have been regarded as of lower status than a King's commission. Women's Corps Status Committee, Minutes of 2nd Meeting, 23 April 1941, *op. cit.*
157. Minute 55, 1 May 1941. (Para 11) Extract from Minutes of 6th Meeting of Army Council, lxx PRO WO32/10031.
158. Ministry of Information. Great Britain *The Social Survey A.T.S. An Investigation of the Attitudes of Women, the General Public*

and the A.T.S. personnel to the Auxiliary Territorial Service.
New Series No. 5 October 1941. IWM Social Survey, 516.3363.
1,031 women and girls considered suitable as entrants to the
Services were interviewed, together with 546 members of the
public other than potential entrants, and 611 members of the ATS
from 22 camps and barracks.

159. 126 (23%) said that of ATS; 44 (8%) of WRNS; 61 (11%) of WAAF.
160. 10% of those asked complained of insufficient pay and allowances for ATS; and 9% in connection with both WAAF and WRNS.
161. Some did object to the bad reputation of the ATS, or their 'loose behaviour'; that they were 'rough, untidy and common and only keen on getting to the men'. Ibid.
162. While 60% of ATS interviewed believed that public opinion of their corps was low, in fact only about 19% of the general public interviewed said they would actually advise against joining the ATS.
163. Apparently even the uniform contributed to this image. Men contemptuously called them 'female Tommies' and 'scum of the earth'. *The Social Survey*, Para C. Bad Reputation of the ATS, op. cit., p. 47.
164. War Cabinet 110 (410, 10 November 1941, PRO CAB 65/20. When asked in the survey of their attitude to the introduction of compulsion for women, 59% had said they would respond willingly, 17% that they would not mind, while 24% expressed resentment. The survey claims that younger women showed less resentment and a greater willingness to accept conscription. In class terms, it was reported that 'the least resentment is shown by the occupations of the lower social classes (e.g. skilled and unskilled factory work, domestic service) and the greatest resentment by the higher social classes ('of independent means')).
165. War Cabinet 110 (41), op. cit. The Minister of Labour denied the suggestion that the Employment Exchanges did not make it sufficiently clear to women on registering that unless they joined one of the Women's Services, the power to compel them to undertake specified employment in industry would be exercised against them. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid.
168. Ibid.
169. 376 H.C. Deb 5s, 2 December 1941, Col. 1024.
170. David Butler and Anne Sloman, *British Political Facts 1900 - 1979*, (1980 edition), p. 432.

171. *Report of the Committee on Amenities and Welfare Conditions in the Three Women's Services*, Official Publication Cmd. 6384 (August 1942), BM, Reports, Commissioners I, 1941 - 42/IV/4. In addition to Violet Markham, the Committee was composed of four women and three men: two women MPs, Miss Thelma Cazalet and Dr Edith Summerskill, and two other women. The men included Air Vice-marshal Sir David Munro and Major-General Rt Hon. Sir Frederick Sykes.
172. *Report of the Committee on Amenities and Welfare Conditions in the Three Women's Services*, *ibid.*
173. Section XIX - The Future - Para 216, *ibid.*
174. Para 217, p. 53, *ibid.*
175. (1) The Assheton Committee, appointed by the Cabinet at the beginning of 1943 to consider the future of the three Women's Auxiliary Services, and to enquire into the possibilities of utilising their personnel in post-war reconstruction. The Chairman was Mr Ralph Assheton, Financial Secretary to the Treasury; the Vice Chairman was Mrs M.H. Hamilton, from Reconstruction Secretariat. There were two male representatives each from the Admiralty, WO and Air Ministry, and female representatives from ML and NS, and Ministry of Home Security. The Assheton Committee interviewed Directors of the three women's Corps, and Violet Markham. The Assheton Committee concluded that in any future war similar to the present, women's services would again be required on something like their existing basis, and that the Service Departments must be able to ensure that the Services could be mobilised and built up promptly and efficiently. *Report of the Committee on the Women's Services*, Assheton Committee, War Cabinet (June 1943) W.P. (43) 269, 24 June 1943, PRO WO32/13160. (2) Sub-Committee on the Future of the Women's Services, Memorandum by DATS and DD of O (ATS) 'The Future of the Women's Services', (123/1131) 2 March 1945, *ibid.*
176. Sub-Committee on the Future of the Women's Services, *ibid.*
177. *Ibid.*
178. *Ibid.*
179. 9th Meeting of Defence Committee, 27 March 1946; Cabinet Paper D.O. (46) 63, 8 May 1946; Defence Committee - Organisation of the Women's Service in Peace; Joint Memorandum by Parliamentary Secretary of Admiralty, The Secretary of State for War and the Under Secretary of State for Air, PRO WO32/13160.
180. This was agreed on 17 May 1946. Interdepartmental Committee on Post War Pay, Allowances and Pensions proposed Pay Terms for Permanent Women's Service - P.W.P.P. (48) 19, undated, (RP WP32/13161).

181. Sub Committee on Regular Women's Services, PRO WO163/299; Inter-Service Working Party on Permanent Women's Services, August 1947, PRO WO163/325.
182. 5 February, 1948.
183. DATS to Adjutant General, 22 April 1948, PRO WO32/13173.
184. DATS suggested that First Aid could become entirely the concern of the 'female element'. Ibid.
185. DATS to Adjutant General, 22 April 1948, *ibid.*
186. Ibid.
187. Brigadier Dalton, AG Coordination to DPA WO, Minute 2, 12 May 1948, PRO WO32/13173.
188. DPA to DATS, 28 May 1948, *ibid.*
189. 'The Defence Role in War of Women's RAC, 21 July 1948; Minutes of a Meeting to discuss the Defensive role of the Women's Royal Army Corps in War, 5 November 1948, 9A, 20/ATS/210 (AG16), PRO WO32/13173.
190. Protected status meant that if captured by the enemy, Medical Service staff would not kept as prisoners of war.
191. 'The Defensive Role in War of the Women's Royal Army Corps', 14 May, 1949, typed paper, PRO WO32/13689. The Act referred to was *The Army and Air Force (Women's Service) Act 1948*.
192. Director Women's Royal Army Corps, the new title given to the head of the Women's Army Corps.
193. R.A. Hull DSD to DPA, Minute 2, 14 June 1949, PRO WO32/13689. For DWRAC's views see DWRAC TO DPA, 31 May 1949, *ibid.*
194. R.A. Hull DSD to DPA, 28 July 1949, *ibid.* DWRAC 26 July 1949, *ibid.*
195. J. McGregor DF to DPA, 26 July 1949, *ibid.*
196. The Women's Services were important because of the shortage of regular manpower. Official Publications: *Defence in the 1980s: Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1980*, Vol. 1, Cd 7826-I (HMSO April 1980), paras. 623 - 628.
197. The countries listed include Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France and the Netherlands. By contrast, there are no women in West German armed forces. At the end of 1986 a group of West German women threatened to take their Government before the Constitutional Court for 'blatant discrimination', unless they are allowed to join the Army. The chairman of a pressure group called 'Women to the Armed Forces' was quoted as saying that

thousands of women were 'waiting for equality and uniform'. *The Independent*, 31 December 1986.

198. The position on the combatant status of women in the armed forces, as presented in the *1980 White Paper*, still applies, though since its publication, women of all three services have been trained to use weapons for defensive purposes only. According to a spokeswoman from the Ministry of Defence, 'Liability to bear arms applies to all WRAC but exemptions are made for those servicewomen who joined the army before 1 June 1982 who have genuine objections. WRAC are trained to use the 9 mm pistol and the submachine gun to the same standard as servicemen. WRAC personnel would not be used on unaccompanied guard or sentry duties and would normally be accompanied on armed duties by men'. Captain J. Barry, Ministry of Defence to writer, 14 July, 1987.

CONCLUSION

*Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
 Man for the sword and for the needle she:
 Man with the head and woman with the heart:
 Man to command and woman to obey;
 All else confusion.**

In an article which discusses the utilisation of women in combat roles in contemporary armed forces, M. Feld suggests that women's desire to be fully combatant can be seen as a response to the belief that their exclusion from combat assignments is an 'overt stigma of civic inferiority'.¹ According to Feld, the opportunity to serve in the combat branches of the armed forces traditionally has been associated with the notion of both civic and personal fulfilment: 'The right to bear arms is...in the tradition of representative government' but that 'tradition has treated citizenship and arms bearing as exclusive masculine privileges'.²

In 1981, seventy-seven years and two world wars after Herbert Spencer had written that 'along with their citizenship, men have the obligation of defending their country while women have no such obligation',³ Mr Enoch Powell, Ulster Unionist MP for South Down, told a House of Commons Standing Committee that nationality should be transferred through men only because

Nationality, in the last resort, is tested by fighting. A Man's nationality is the nation for which he will fight. His

* From *The Princess: A Medley*, by Alfred Lord Tennyson; p. 167 *Poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson, Selected with an Introduction by Stephen Gwynne* (Oxford 1950. Gwynne writes in the introduction: '"The Princess" may come to be read with curiosity, as a document in the development of women's position'.

nationality is the expression of his ultimate allegiance... whether we like it or not...at the heart of nationality there lies a commitment to defence - the defence of a society, to the defence of a territory - a commitment which, in the last resort, must be sealed by physical force and by personal sacrifice.⁴

Powell insisted that women have no part in this 'test' of nationality:

One of the essential differentiations of function [between men and women] is that between fighting on the one hand, and the creation and preservation of life on the other. The two sexes are deeply differentiated in accordance with those two functions. Man is not merely a social animal; he is a fighting social animal. He is specialised for fighting; and he is also specialised for securing the survival and upbringing of successive generations, and the protection of the young. That differentiation of specialisation corresponds with the human sexes - with man and woman.⁵

Spencer and Powell both assumed that the 'obligation' on which they based their arguments required no justification. Spencer did not explain why men only had the obligation to defend their country, presumably because he believed his assertion to be self-evident. Powell's 'whether we like it or not' suggests he is expressing a recognisable law of nature, if not a written law of the land.⁶ The views of both men reflect commonly held opinions: as the anthropologist, Lionel Tiger writes, 'almost universally, war is an all-male enterprise'.⁷

Leaving aside the injustices created by appointing one particular function in society as worthy of the transmission of nationality, there are two aspects to the crucial question of women's role in war: first, the desirability (or otherwise) of women fighting, and secondly, the related argument over nationality and citizenship, expressed so clearly by Enoch Powell. In his review of a book about women and the armed forces by Cynthia Enloe, John Keegan suggests that 'the nub of the issue is combat'.⁸ He comments on the difficulty of interpreting Enloe's attitude towards combat - 'as far as she can be followed, she seems to want women to be in combat rather than out of

it' - and he describes this as 'a profoundly depressing conclusion'. He goes on to point out that there are all sorts of physical reasons why women have been excluded from fighting in every society of which we know; some of them are cultural and 'sexist'; but what is important is that 'as war has grown more horrible, pacific and anti-militarist reasons have swelled to reinforce them'. Keegan quotes Thomas Hardy, who, in response to an invitation in 1898 to contribute an article on peace to a new periodical, wrote: 'As a preliminary, all civilised nations might at least show their humanity by convenanting that no horses be employed in battle'. Keegan approves of such a sentiment, and considers it appropriate to women, too; its appeal lies in the fact that if fulfilled, it advances the cause of 'the progressive limitation of the suffering war inflicts on all living creatures, human and non-human, towards the end that war itself might eventually wither away'.

This is an admirable attitude but unfortunately many of those who may seek to exclude women [and horses] from unnecessary violence continue to see the organised violence of armed forces as the ultimate weapon in the nation's armoury, and far from 'withering away', they are as firmly entrenched as ever. If Enloe's attitude to women and combat is ambivalent, in the circumstances, it is unsurprising.

One of the 'major historical questions' which Arthur Marwick suggests should be asked about women and war is whether the First World War enhanced the status of women in society and marked a definite step forward towards equal rights?'.⁹ This brings us to the nationality/citizenship question, which is essentially about status. The most significant feature of the women's corps movement during the First World War is that however traditional or conservative it was, it

reflected, above all, women's desire to participate fully in the affairs of the nation.¹⁰ On the surface, what happened in 1917 and 1918, when the three women's military corps were set up, was similar to what had happened earlier in numerous industries and occupations: dilution and substitution were the order of the day. The aftermath, too, mirrored the experience of other working women at the end of the war: for all the expressions of admiration, for all the recognition that women's contribution had not been negligible and that in a future war it would certainly be needed again, and despite the desire of the women in command themselves to retain a corps in peacetime, the women's corps were disbanded.

At the same time, the efforts of women such as Katharine Furse and Violet Markham meant that the establishment of the women's corps was not simply a process of dilution or an extension of government policy to a new field. The desire to set up a disciplined body of women, with official recognition and status, was not prompted only by a wish to provide women with the opportunity to perform a practical function, but also to gain, once and for all, public recognition that women could contribute fully to the needs of their country. In the end, the attitudes of the political and military authorities changed the emphasis, from a 'National Women's Corps', controlled throughout by women, to individual women's corps, each closely associated with their male equivalent. Whether or not this marks a failure for women rather depends upon how one views the prospect of a National Women's Corps. In 1943 J.B. Priestley recorded his conviction

that there is much to be said in favour of a single Woman's Service, a feminine Combined Operations Force, with a special uniform of its own, whose members could be attached for duty to any of the three male armed Forces. Women would then have had their own uniformed Service, and there would have been no suggestion of their being feminine imitations of sailors, soldiers, and airmen. They would, of course, have lost something

by not sharing the glory and traditions of the three men's services, but they would have gained by establishing this definite corps of their own and so creating their own traditions.'¹¹

In the First World War, for women to join the armed forces, in whatever capacity, was seen as a step towards equal rights: the opening of an avenue previously closed to them. Because anti-suffragists had so often evoked the 'physical force' argument as justification for not giving women the vote, many women's suffrage supporters approved of the establishment of the women's corps.¹² From the written record, it seems that most of the women who volunteered looked back on their experience of the women's corps with both satisfaction and nostalgia, and recent interviews by Elizabeth Crosthwait of members of the WAAC rank and file confirm this view: the women recall their time in the WAAC as a 'wonderful experience', which gave them greater confidence; the companionship was remembered fondly, and valued highly.¹³ For these women, the WAAC represented 'a longed-for opportunity to become more directly involved in the war'.¹⁴ They all described themselves as patriotic, and they had felt unfulfilled and dissatisfied with their inability to do anything important for the war effort. All of them had been working before they joined the WAAC, and in addition to satisfying their patriotic urges, the Corps appeared to offer a unique opportunity for adventure; a chance to do something extraordinary, or to escape private tyrannies.¹⁵ Crosthwait notes that it was the military aspect of the Corps, the chance to 'be soldiers', which proved one of the most attractive aspects for some WAAC and she concludes that 'the experience of joining the WAAC was an exceptional event in the women's lives'.¹⁶

During both wars the attitude of the political and military authorities towards women in the armed services was essentially pragmatic - if not cynical. In the First World War, for as long as it was possible, increasing the number of men who joined the forces was considered preferable to introducing women. But the supply of men was not limitless and, in step with the time, the military authorities were easily persuaded that there were tasks women could do in all three of the armed forces. In the words of 'Wise Bob' Lawson, commenting on the notion that in times of stress women would not be able to bear the strain of working in certain areas: 'Whatever weight these considerations may have had in the past it is lessened now by the present need for men'.¹⁷ In a similar vein, before the outbreak of the Second World War it was agreed that training women *before* a war was wasteful, 'as it was impossible to anticipate the exact duties on which women would be employed, and might even be harmful to future organisation'.¹⁸

To some degree, the women's military services were regarded if not exactly as a joke, as not to be taken terribly seriously. Thus, Deborah Thom writes: 'The ideological load of the women's services was not as heavy as it seemed. In the Army women performed 'women's' tasks. They did domestic jobs - cooking, serving, cleaning, laundering and tailoring - or clerical work - signals, supply and records'.¹⁹ It is undeniable that the work carried out by women in the armed forces, in the First World War at least, was generally traditional 'women's work', but it would be a mistake to dismiss the establishment of the Women's Corps as of no consequence because of this. Rather, it should be seen as contributing to a wider acceptance of an extension of women's roles, and a recognition of their abilities

in many spheres. In the Second World War opportunities for women so greatly expanded as to give credibility to the 'progressive' view. In the final analysis, one does not have to be a militarist to recognise that the Women's Corps played a part in the expansion of opportunities for women.

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FOOTNOTES to CONCLUSION [Pages 403 - 409]

1. M.D. Feld, 'Arms and the Woman', in *Armed Forces and Society* Vol. 4, No. 4, August 1978, pp. 557 - 8.
2. Ibid. Feld writes that 'an argument as old as Machiavelli asserts that the state, in arming its citizens, gives them a guarantee of its own good behavior. Members of groups denied that right are denied that guarantee'. He notes that belief has been traced from the Renaissance through 17th and 18th century England, to its culmination in the Constitution of the United States', in J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton 1975).
3. See Introduction, p. 15.
4. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Official Report: *Standing Committee F, British Nationality Bill, 3rd Sitting, Tuesday 17 February, 1981*, HMSO (1981), Cols, 110, 113, 114.
5. Ibid.
6. In reply to a request to explain more fully the grounds on which he based his claim that military obligation was the basis of true citizenship, Powell replied that he did not think he could 'usefully add to the very full statement in my speech at cols. 107ff of the Hansard for 17 February 1981, of Standing Committee F'. Correspondence with author 25 March, 1987.
7. Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups* (1969), p. 80.
8. John Keegan, review of Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives* (1983), *Sunday Times*, 17 July 1983.
9. Arthur Marwick, *Women at War*, op. cit., p. 12.
10. Louis Renault, Professor of International Law at the Sorbonne, and French representative at the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, defined war 'simply as a state of affairs...'. [From Robert Jacomet, '*Les lois de la guerre continentale*'. Publié sous la direction de la section historique de l'Etat-Major de l'Armée (Paris 1913), quoted in Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare. The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (1983), pp. 5 - 6.] Described thus, it is not difficult to understand women's desire to be involved in the 'state of affairs' in which their country was absorbed.
11. J.B. Priestly, *British Women Go to War* (1943), p. 23.
12. Anne Wiltsher writes that 'Half the leading women in the British suffrage movement opposed the war'. These included Catherine Marshall, Maude Royden, Kathleen Courtney and Helena Swanwick (all ex-executive members of the NUWSS), and the suffragettes Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Sylvia Pankhurst, and Charlotte

Despard. Anne Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women. Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War* (1985), pp. 1 - 7. I would not argue about the number of women who did or did not oppose the war; but whatever its strength, the peace movement does not appear to have had much impact on the dominant mood of the unconverted, who were the majority. At the same time, opposing the war did not necessarily mean that they would oppose the idea of the women's military corps.

13. Elizabeth Crosthwait, 'The Girl Behind the Man Behind the Gun': The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, 1914 - 18', in Leonore Davidoff and Belinda Westover, *Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words* (1986), p. 180. There are also interviews with Women War Workers on tape at the Imperial War Museum (Department of Sound Records); and Southampton City Museum (Education Service, the oral history project on Women's Work in the First World War).
14. Ibid., p. 170.
15. Ibid., pp. 171, 180.
16. Ibid., pp. 172, 179.
17. See Chapter 6, p. 139.
18. See Chapter 11, p. 363.
19. Deborah Thom, 'The Ideology of Women's Work', op. cit., p. 95.

APPENDIX I

A SELECTION OF WAR OFFICE AND ARMY COUNCIL INSTRUCTIONS
RELATING TO WOMEN ISSUED DURING WORLD WAR I*

- * *For a complete list, see ARMY COUNCIL INSTRUCTIONS, Ministry of Defence, Military Library.*

1914

- 16/10 WOI 185 *Temporary Women Typists Pay.*
Temporary Women typists, if taken into employment during the present emergency, may be paid at discretion of GOs C at a rate not exceeding 20s a week. [WOIs and ACIs relating to clerks and typists were issued throughout the war]

1915

- 10/3 WOI 101 *Employment of Members of VADs in Military Hospitals*
- 14/3 WOI 143 *National Union of Women Workers of GB and Ireland Patrols.*
- 29/4 WOI 261 *Employment of Female Clerks in Record Offices.*
It has been suggested that female clerks might suitably be employed in record offices with the object of giving employment to women who may be out of work and of releasing men for military service. It is considered that women would be able to perform much of the clerical work now done in these offices by men, and that there would be no general objection to employing a certain proportion in each office. GOsC are asked to consider this proposal and to report their views as to the desirability of adopting it in commands. The question of providing proper and separate lavatory accommodation, and the possibility of procuring locally the number of women who might be required, should not be overlooked.
- 31/10 WOI 303 *Employment of Women Cooks at Convalescent Hospitals.*
In connection with the arrangements which are being, or have been made for the employment of women cooks, provided by the Women's Legion, at convalescent hospitals, it has been decided that the rate of pay will be £25 pa together with free rations and accommodation, also that all monetary emoluments in the way of salaries or allowances due to the women who are so provided should be paid to the Secretary, Women's Legion - Cookery Section, 74 Marlborough Mansions, Cannon Hill, NW and not to the Cooks themselves. The same arrangement regarding the method of payment will apply to any instructresses in cookery provided by the same organisation.

4/11 **WOI 48 *Clerks for Army Pay Offices. Employment of Women.***

It is notified for the information of all concerned that first, the enlistment of clerks for the APC has terminated, second, no further engagement of temporary clerks at 35s a week can be sanctioned. As far as possible all vacancies should be filled by women clerks, but there will be no objection to the employment of a limited number of suitable men as writers ...provided they are ineligible for combatant units, and that authority is first obtained from this office. Preference should be given to discharged soldiers.

10/11 **WOI 113 *Lady Superintendents to supervise the work of Women Clerks in Regimental Pay Offices.***

19/11 **WOI 215 *Employment of Female Clerks in Ordnance Depots.***

With reference to 11 August and 29 April 1915, on the subject of the employment of female clerks...From the fact that men are being called upon to serve their country, in a more active capacity in cases where they are qualified to do so and that there are so many necessary changes in the Army Ordnance personnel at stations at home, it is requested that similar steps may be considered in connection with the Ordnance Depots in other Commands, which it may appear desirable to carry out.

19/11 **WOI 218 *Women Cooks at Convalescent Hospitals. Allowance for Uniform.***

...a payment of £4 may be made to the Secretary Women's Legion (Cookery Section)...as an allowance for uniform for each of the women cooks paid at £25 pa provided by the Legion and now employed at convalescent hospitals.

2/12 **WOI 18 *Instruction of Cooks by Teachers from the Women's Legion.***

Qualified teachers belonging to the Women's Legion (Cookery Section) have been engaged to visit units on home service and assist with the instruction of cooks, prevention of waste and ration management generally, wherever such assistance is feasible and desirable. These ladies are to be given all the assistance possible to enable them to carry out their duties. They have been directed to give their advice and instructions through the serjeant cooks or senior soldier cooks.

1916

5/1 **ACI 15 *Women Employed in Military Hospitals***

....The women employed in military hospitals will be engaged by the OC under 2 main classes (1) General Service women; (2) Labour Staff.

9/2 **ACI 327 *Form of Agreement for Members of VADs employed on nursing duties in Military Hospitals.***

- 26/2 ACI 441 *Women Cooks at Convalescent Hospitals and Instructresses in Cooking at Military Schools of Cookery and with units at home.*

...The cooking staff will, except where otherwise specially provided for, be subject to the Regulations for Civilian Subordinates

- 25/5 ACI 1060 *Women employed in Military Hospitals.*

- 11/7 ACI 1381 *Employment of Women Cooks.*

Subject to modifications contained in this instruction, the employment of women cooks and waitresses in Officers' Messes, etc., under regulations issued in Section I of ACI 441 of 1916...is now authorised wherever soldiers employed under ACIs 429 and 1276 of 1916 can be released for other services and the Commandant of the Women's Legion is prepared to find the necessary substitutions...

- 27/10 ACI 2034 *Employment of Women Cooks etc. supplied by Women's Legion (Military Cookery Section)..*

- 7/11 ACI 2101 *Employment of Women Cooks etc. supplied by Women's Legion (Military Cookery Section).*

1917

- 12/1 ACI 67 *Employment of Women Cooks etc. supplied by the Women's Legion (Military Cookery Section).*

In view of the valuable services rendered by the women cooks, waitresses, and housemaids supplied by the Women's Legion, it has been decided that the wages of these employees shall be issued as from 1 January 1917, at the rate of £26 per annum (10s a week), instead of £20 as laid down in ...ACI 2034 of 1916, their other emoluments, i.e. rations, quarters, etc., remaining at present...

- 28/3 ACI 530 *Employment of Women Cooks.*

1. It has been decided to divide women employed as cooks, etc. into 2 classes.
2. It should be clearly understood that the object of the employment of women under ACI 2034 of 1916 is to replace men; there is no intention of providing women for additional services which were not performed by men. Care will therefore be taken that women are not employed unless a soldier is thereby released for military duty.

- *28/3 ACI 537 *EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN WITH ARMIES ABROAD.*

The employment of women at the Base and on the Lines of Communication abroad has been approved.

See p. 415 - 6 for details of ACI 537.

537. Employment of Women with the Armies Abroad.

415

The employment of women at the Base and on the Lines of Communication abroad has been approved. The conditions of service and rates of pay are as follows:—

1. Period of Engagement.

The period of engagement will be for twelve months from the date on which the enrolment form for service is signed, or for the duration of the war, whichever is the greater period, on condition that service may be terminated forthwith on ground of misconduct or breach of conditions, on receipt of notice given by the Army Council, or that in the event of the woman's services being no longer required, they may be terminated by one week's notice in writing being given by the Army Council.

A form of enrolment for service will be signed by which the woman undertakes to serve at home or abroad. These enrolment forms will be kept at the War Office.

A bonus of £5 will be paid to each woman, irrespective of category or grade, at the end of the first twelve months completed approved service and proportionately for any further period.

2. Classes of Employment.

The main categories of employment will be as follows:—

- A. Clerical, typist, shorthand typist.
- B. Cooks, waitresses, and domestic staff.
- C. Motor transport service.
- D. Storehouse women, checkers and unskilled labour.
- E. Telephone and postal services.
- F. Miscellaneous services which do not fall within any of the above

3. Rates of pay.

	<i>Per week.</i>	
A.—Ordinary clerical work and typists	23s. to 27s.	} according to efficiency.
Clerks employed on higher clerical and supervisory duties	28s. to 32s.	
Shorthand typists	28s. to 32s.	

These rates are for a week of 42 working hours, after which overtime will be paid for at the rate of 7d. per hour for ordinary clerks, and 9d. per hour for clerks employed on higher work and for shorthand typists

	<i>Per annum</i>
B—Head cooks and head waitresses	£40
Cooks, waitresses, housemaids and *laundresses	£26

with free board and lodging, together with 6d. a week to meet laundry expenses on personal clothing.

	<i>Per week.</i>
C—Superintendents 1st Class in charge of 100, or more women	52s 6d.
Superintendents 2nd Class in charge of less than 100 women	46s.
Head drivers	40s.
Qualified driver mechanics	35s.
Washers	20s.

These rates include Sunday work when necessary, but, if employed on Sunday, a day's rest in lieu will be given

Overtime will be allowed, except to superintendents, at the rate of 5d. per hour after 8½ working hours per day.

	<i>Per week.</i>
D—Storehouse women and unskilled labour	20s, with extra pay up to 2s. per week where special aptitude is required.
Leading hands	22s.
Checkers	22s. to 24s.
Assistant forewomen	24s
Forewomen	24s. to 30s. according to numbers supervised.

These rates cover 48 working hours per week

Overtime will be allowed at the rate of time and a quarter for the first two hours per day, thereafter and on Sundays, time and a half.

E—Telephone and Postal Services.

Telephonists	28s. per week of 48 hours.	} Without overtime
Overtime, 8d. an hour weekdays, 10d an hour Sundays		
Telegraphists	34s. per week, 48 hours.	
Overtime, 10d an hour weekdays, 1s an hour Sundays		
Sorters	26s per week, 48 hours	
Overtime 8d an hour weekdays, 10d. an hour Sundays		
Telephone supervisors	40s. per week.	} Without overtime
Telegraph supervisors	50s.	
Sorter supervisors	32s.	
Postwomen—as for unskilled labour under D		

F.—Miscellaneous Services

Special rates of pay will be approved by the War Office for each class according to nature of employment, with a minimum of 20s per week.

General

The O C the unit or organization to which the woman is attached for duty may, when he considers it desirable, lay down normal working hours per week and may pay inclusive weekly rates of pay for all time worked without pay for overtime, such inclusive weekly rates will be fixed at what the earnings would be for a similar number of hours worked including overtime, under the conditions laid down above

The pay will be issuable as from the date on which the enrolment form is signed.

The enrolment form will be signed as on the date on which the woman joins for duty, instruction, &c., in accordance with orders received from the War Office.

When a woman is about to proceed abroad an advance of pay not exceeding £1, in addition to any pay due for service before embarkation, will be made if necessary by the O.C. the unit or other organization to which the woman is temporarily attached at home. The O.C., who will issue the pay (see para. 5 for deductions) of the woman weekly for the period prior to the embarkation for abroad, will give the woman a last pay certificate, showing the amount of the advance, and the date up to which she has been paid; and this certificate must be produced to the O.C. the unit or other organization abroad to which she is attached for duty, who will take the woman into his payment and will make the necessary adjustment of the advance.

The procedure regarding the issue of and accounting for pay, &c., will be the same as that in force for ordinary civilian labour.

4. Sickness, Injury, &c.

(a) Medical attendance while abroad will be provided free.

(b) In case of sickness full pay will be given up to a maximum of 3 months while abroad, any extension beyond this period will require War Office approval. If a woman is returned sick to the United Kingdom, home conditions will apply from date of return, i.e., Classes under Section 47 of the National Health Insurance Act (*viz.*, all under 2 A. and 2 B., and superintendents under 2 C.) will receive 6 weeks' full pay. Postal employees will be dealt with under the special provisions in the National Health Insurance Act applicable to them. Others will receive no sick pay, and will be dealt with for medical attendance and sickness benefit, &c., under the National Insurance Act.

Arrears on insurance cards must be paid on return by the women if they wish to remain in benefit (only the employee's contribution need be paid).

(c) Payment for injury abroad will be made in accordance with the scheme under Injuries in War Compensation Act, 1914, Session 2.

5. Board, Lodging, &c.

The women whilst abroad will be accommodated in hostels under the care and supervision of Lady Superintendents.

In all cases other than 2 B (Cooks, &c.), D (Storehouse women, &c.), and F (Miscellaneous Services), a deduction not exceeding 14s. per week will be made to cover cost of board and lodging, and washing on a regulated scale, which will be provided by the authorities.

In the case of C, D and F, when the pay is less than 21s. per week, the deduction will not in any case exceed 13s. per week, when 21s. and over 21s. the 14s. rule will apply.

Whilst a woman is at home preparatory to embarkation for abroad, and is provided with board and lodging under arrangements made by the War Office at the public expense, a deduction of 12s. 6d., or 11s. 6d., respectively, will be made in lieu of 14s. or 13s., and the woman will make her own arrangements for washing.

The O.C. who issues the pay will be responsible for seeing that this deduction is made. Detailed instructions will be issued separately on the accounting arrangements involved.

6. Uniform.

Except in the case of the Motor Transport Section (see below) a grant of £4 to provide uniform will be allowed for each woman on signing the enrolment form, and a further grant of £1 at the end of six months from that date. Similar grants will be made for the second year's service.

In the case of the Motor Transport Section, the rates will be as follows:—

	Initial grant.	Renewal grant every six months.
Superintendents	£6	£3
Head drivers	6	3
Qualified driver mechanics	3	2

These sums will be credited to the woman by the Quartermaster in charge of women's clothing, and the necessary articles of outfit supplied will be charged against them, the eventual balance, if any, being paid to the woman on termination of her engagement. It should be clearly understood that the amounts shown are the total annual contribution by the War Office towards the cost of providing and maintaining the uniform. Any additional articles required by the woman may be obtained on payment.

All ranks of the Motor Transport Section, with the exception of the superintendents, will receive an issue of one overcoat of military pattern, and a suit of overalls; and washers will, in addition, be supplied with washing boots. The issue of a leather jerkin to each driver employed with the Royal Flying Corps and Army Service Corps, is also approved. All these articles will remain the property of the War Department.

In the event of a woman ceasing to be employed through her own fault before completing the period of service in respect of which the initial allowance is issued she will be liable to refund one-twelfth of the amount so paid for each month or portion of a month short of the period of service.

In the event of her failing to refund the proportionate amount it may be deducted from any balance of pay remaining due to her.

The first payments and outfits will be provided for at home before embarkation, later issues being made in France as they become due.

The uniform worn will conform to the pattern provided by the Army Council.

7. General Conditions.

No woman under 20 or over 40 years of age will be eligible for employment, and no woman whose husband is serving abroad.

Medical examination by a woman doctor will be required.

Free conveyance from place of residence to the station abroad will be granted on appointment and on termination of engagement similar facilities for the return journey. The expense of any travelling on leave will not be borne by the public.

A fortnight's holiday, with pay, will be allowed during each year's service, provided the exigencies of the service will permit and that transport accommodation is available.

The period of preparation in England will include elementary instruction in hygiene and discipline.

7 July.

PART I.

DEFINITIONS.

The term "Controllers and Administrators" includes the appointments specified in para 5.

The term "Woman" includes other grades of the W.A.A.C.

The term "members" includes all grades of the W.A.A.C.

GENERAL ORGANIZATION.

Formation.

1. Approval has been given for the formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

Object.

2. The object of the Corps is to effect substitution of women for soldiers in certain employments throughout units, formations and offices administered by the Army Council (other than the War Office, Hospitals, and those administered by the Finance Ministry) at Home, and at the Bases and on the Lines of Communication Overseas.

The following rules regarding the employment of women of the W.A.A.C. will be strictly adhered to for calculating the numbers to be employed.

- (a) Four women clerks will be considered as equivalent to three soldier clerks.
- (b) Four technical women for the R.F.C. and A.S.C. Motor Transport will be considered as equivalent to three technical soldiers.
- (c) A certain number of women will be required for clerical and domestic duties (see Appendix B)* within the Corps.
- (d) The scale of employment for cooks and domestics in military messes and cockhouses will be as laid down in Appendix C.†

Except as detailed above and in cases where the employment of a soldier would otherwise have been officially authorized, no woman of the W.A.A.C. will be employed unless a soldier is thereby relieved for other purposes.

The main categories of employments in which it is intended gradually to effect substitution of W.A.A.C. women for soldiers at home and Overseas are indicated in para 4.

Substitution at Home will first of all be gradually introduced by the W.A.A.C. into—

Command employments

Garrison employments.

Regimental employments—in draft finding and Garrison Units (other than the Home Service Divisions, Provisional Brigades, and Garrison Battalions)

Royal Flying Corps technical and other employments.

Army Service Corps regimental and technical employments.

The regimental employments in which it is intended that women of the W.A.A.C. will be substituted for men, at the discretion of G.O.s-C-in-C., are as follows—

Officers' messes, clerks, sergeants' messes, tailors, cooks, librarians, company storemen, shoemakers, quartermasters' storemen, regimental institutes, orderlies (see Appendix to A.C.I. 338 of 1917).

Women of the W.A.A.C. will not be substituted as Batmen

Substitution will not be undertaken by the W.A.A.C. until suitable accommodation can be obtained (see para. 16) and the requisite staff of the W.A.A.C. is available.

Women for employment in Hospitals will not be provided by the W.A.A.C., but by the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John from the general service section of the V.A.D.

Massages for employment in Military Hospitals, Convalescent Hospitals and Command Depots will continue to be supplied to the War Department by the Almeric Paget Military Massage Corps as at present.

Administration.

3 The W.A.A.C. will be administered by the Adjutant-General's Department of the War Office. It will be controlled by a Chief Controller. Four sections will be established, Cookery, Mechanical, Clerical, and Miscellaneous.

* See page 139

† See page 144

Method of obtaining Personnel.

4. Women will be obtained for the Corps by the Adjutant-General's Department at the War Office. Selection and Medical Boards will be established for this purpose. Detailed instructions regarding the composition and functions of these Boards will be issued in due course.

The main categories of employment in which the substitution of women at Home and at the Base and on the Lines of Communication Overseas has been approved are as follows:—

- A.—Clerks, Librarians, Accountants, Typists, Shorthand typists.
- B.—Cooks, Wine waitresses, Domestic staff (housemaids, laundresses, vegetable women, pantry maids, scrubbers, washers up, charwomen) by-product women. Waitresses, Butlers.
- C.—Motor Transport Service.
- D.—Storehouse women (other than those under G), checkers, packers and unskilled labour, Tailors, Sewers, Messengers, Shoemakers, Bakers.
- E.—Telephone and Postal Services
- F.—Miscellaneous Services.
- G.—Technical women (employed with the R.F.C. and A.S.C. Motor Transport).

Appointments.

3. The following appointments are authorized —

Appointment	Employment	Badge.	How worn.
Chief Controller ...	H Q, W A A C ..	Double Rose ...	On shoulder strap
" " " ...	Overseas	1 Fleur-de-lys and 2 roses	" "
Deputy Chief Controller	H Q, W A A C ...	1 Fleur-de-lys and two roses	" "
" " "	Overseas	1 Fleur-de-lys and 1 rose	" "
Section Controller ..	H Q, W A A C. ...	1 Fleur-de-lys and 1 rose	" "
Assistant Section Controller	H Q, W A A C ...	2 Fleur-de-lys ...	" "
Area Controller	Attached to H Q of Commands and to certain Areas and Base Ports Overseas	1 Fleur-de-lys ...	" "
Clothing Controller ..	H Q, W A A C ...	Three roses ...	" "
Technical Assistant Controller ...	Inspector of Women's Work	1 rose	" "
Unit Administrator ..	In charge of large hostels	3 "	" "
Deputy Administrator ...	(a) When in charge of small hostels	2 "	" "
	(b) When assistant in large hostels	1 "	" "
Assistant Administrator	Employed in hostels, &c	1 "	" "
Quartermistress Class I ...	(a) Attached to Depot hostels of 500	2 "	" "
Quartermistress Class II	(b) Attached under War Office orders	1 "	" "

Application form A.G. XI/194 for these appointments can be obtained by candidates from the Chief Controller or Area Controllers. When appointments are approved they will appear in the *London Gazette* in a similar manner to Q A I M N S.

Subordinate Appointments.

6. The following subordinate appointments are approved.—

Forewoman (hostel)	..	1 to 50 women, Appendix B *
„ (laundress)	.	See Appendix B *
„ (cook)	.	} According to scale laid down in Appendix C †
„ (waitress)	.	
„ (motor transport)	.	1 to 10 women.
„ (clerk)	.	1 „ 5 „
„ (groom)	.	1 „ 12 „
„ (R.F.C. technical and unskilled)	.	1 „ 40 „
Assistant forewoman (R F C. technical and unskilled)	.	1 „ 20 „
Forewoman (unskilled labour)	.	1 „ 40 „
Assistant forewoman (unskilled labour)	.	1 „ 20 „
„ „ (printer)	.	1 „ 12 „
Forewoman (telephonist)	.	1 „ 20 „
„ (telegraphist)	.	1 „ 20 „
„ (sorter)	.	1 „ 20 „

Commanding Officers may request in their application for women of the W A A C that forewomen may be supplied in the proportion laid down above.

When a woman of the W A A C. is recommended for promotion to one of the above appointments by the Commanding Officer, or in the case of Hostel subordinates by the Unit Administrator, such appointment may be authorized by the Officer i/c Records, W A A C. at home and by General Headquarters Overseas.

The above grades except assistant forewomen will be distinguished by a rose and laurel leaf to be worn on the right upper arm. Assistant forewomen will be distinguished by a laurel leaf to be worn on the right upper arm.

Discipline.

7—(a) Os C Army formations will afford every facility for the proper discharge of their duty to Controllers and all classes of Administrators of the W A A C who are responsible for the supervision of the women of the W A A C and will bring to the notice of such Os C. any irregularities that may occur.

(b) Members of the W A A C, whilst on duty away from their Hostel, will be directly under the control of the Commanding Officer of the formation or the officer in charge of the office to which they are attached for duty. Whilst off duty or on duty in the Hostel, they will be subject to the control of the W A A C.

Enrolment Form.

8 The liabilities of all women signing the enrolment form are set forth in that document (Appendix A†)

No woman under 20 and no member of the W A A C. whose husband is serving Overseas in the same theatre of war will be eligible for employment Overseas. If the husband is subsequently ordered to the same theatre of war the member will be withdrawn and employed in Home Service.

The minimum age for service at home will be 18 years.

Uniform.

9 A sealed pattern of uniform has been approved, and will be worn by women of the W A A C serving Overseas.

Instruction regarding the wearing of uniform by members of the W A A C at home will be issued later.

* See page 138

† See page 144

‡ See page 134

- 8/7 ACI 1074 ***WAAC. Employment of Women Cooks, etc. for duty in Canadian Military Hospitals.***
 1. The absorption of the Military Cookery Section of the Women's Legion into the WAAC, notified in ACI 1069 of 1917, is not intended to cause any interference in the supply of women cooks, waitresses, housemaids, etc. etc. for duty in Canadian Military Hospitals, Convalescent Homes, and Nursing sister Homes, authorised by ACI 601 of 1917, but some modification of the arrangements notified in that ACI is necessary.
- 15/7 ACI 1111 ***WAAC. Outfit Allowance at Home***
 ...it is notified that uniform will only be worn at home by members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in cases where their duties necessitate regular attendance at camps or other military formations, and where they are brought into close association with the troops, and the outfit and uniform allowance...will be limited to members whose conditions of work satisfy these conditions.
- 20/9 ACI 1293 ***Provision, Selection and medical examination of women for the WAAC (to be read in conjunction with ACIs 1069 and 1111 of 1917).***
- 6/9 ACI 1374 ***Rates of Pay of the Telephone and Postal Services of the WAAC.***
 It is notified that rates of pay authorised for women enrolled for employment in WAAC under Class E para 10. of ACI 1069 of 1917 have been subject to revision. Following rates will be substituted: Telephonists; 35s per week; Telegraphists; 42s per week; sorters 30s; Forewomen sorters; 35s.
- 12/9 ACI 1412 ***Enrolment into WAAC of Women employed at Home under existing Army Council Instructions.***
- 28/10 ACI 1616 ***WAAC Supplementary instructions regarding, and amendments to ACI 1069 of 1917.***
- 26/12 ACI 1874 ***WAAC Mobile and Immobile Branches.***
 1. It has been decided that the WAAC shall in future consist of 2 branches: a) Mobile b) Immobile.

1918

- 13/1 ACI 42 ***Women's Legion Motor Transport and Military Cookery Section.***
 1a. It has been decided that all women motor drivers required for service with the Army at Home will be provided by Women's Legion and not by WAAC.
 b. All women motor drivers for services Overseas (other than ambulance drivers provided by VAD under ACI 1330 of 1917) will be provided by WAAC.
 c. Women motor drivers belonging to WAAC, and who are now serving at Home will be disposed of as follows:
 i) Those enrolled for service at Home and Overseas will be replaced as quickly as possible for Women's Legion Motor

drivers, and will be despatched overseas.

ii) Those enrolled for service at Home only will be given the opportunity of volunteering for service Overseas, provided they are passed medically fit.

iii) Those enrolled for Home service only and unwilling to proceed Overseas or medically unfit, will be permitted to take discharge from WAAC. They will be eligible to enrol in Women's Legion Motor Transport Section provided they are medically fit, and desire to do so.

8/5 ACI 498 *AMENDMENTS TO ARMY ACT.*

1. During the continuance in force of an emergency Order by His Majesty under section 108 (A) of Army Act women who are enrolled for employment by Army Council shall be entitled to be billeted and accordingly, the following subsection shall be added at end of that section:

(7) The provisions of this Act as to billeting shall, whilst any Order of His Majesty under this section is in force, apply to women who are enrolled for employment by the Army Council as they apply to soldiers; and for the purposes of those provisions as so applied, officers of any troops with whom the women to be billeted are employed and the officer commanding those troops shall be deemed in relation to such women to be their officers and commanding officer; and if any such woman is guilty of an offence in relation to billeting mentioned in section 30 of this Act she shall be punishable on summary conviction in manner provided by subsection (2) of section 111 of this Act...

22/5 ACI 569 *Billeting - Women.*

With ref. to Clause 4 of Army (Annual) Act 1918, see para 1 of ACI 498, which legalises the billeting of women, it is not the intention of the Army Council that such billeting is to be resorted to generally, but only on emergency when more satisfactory arrangements for accommodation for women cannot be made. This legislation will not be utilised for the QMAAC, for whom special arrangements are made.

14/6 ACI 669 *QMAAC.*

1. Regulations for QMAAC have been approved.

1919

14/4 ACI 258 *Demobilisation Benefits - QMAAC, VAD, GS Section, Women's Legion (MD) and Women's Forage Corps.*

9/5 ACI 306 *Repatriation of Members of Women's Corps.*

Repatriation at the public expense will be granted under certain conditions to members of the following corps who came from abroad.

i) QMAAC.

ii) Women's Legion (Motor Drivers).

iii) Women's Forage Corps.

iv) VAD GS Members.

2. Members of these Corps may claim repatriation on the

following conditions. a) That they came to UK after outbreak of war. b) That on 11 November 1918, they were serving on an agreement of not less than six months. c) That if not serving on that date their services had been terminated through no fault of their own, and they had since leaving the Corps been engaged on work of national importance.

3. The accommodation provided will be:

Officials - 1st class. Other ranks - 3rd Class.

10/6 ACI 365 *Women's Legion, Motor Drivers.*

1. It has been decided that, in future, women drivers for service overseas (other than ambulance drivers provided by VAD under ACI 1330 of 1917) shall be provided by Women's Legion, Motor Drivers.

2. Women motor drivers belonging to QMAAC, now serving overseas, will be replaced, as circumstances demand, by personnel of the WLMD.

26/8 ACI 507 *Army of Occupation Bonus for Officials and Members of Enrolled Women's Corps.*

1. It has been decided that a bonus shall be granted to officials and members of VAD, GS Section I; WL (MD) and QMAAC, who undertake a fresh engagement to serve to 30 April, 1920, or have already undertaken to serve for a longer period.

1920

4/5 ACI 280 *QUEEN MARY'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS.*

1. The Record Office of the QMAAC will move on 30 April 1920 from 49 Grosvenor St., London, W.L. to the War Office, Embankment Annexe.

2. On or after 1st May 1920, all correspondence should be addressed: Officer I/C Records, QMAAC Room 62A, War Office, Embankment Annexe, SW1.

4. All correspondence etc. intended for HQ of Corps, *which will cease to exist on 30th April, 1920*, should in future be addressed as above.

20/10 ACI 703 *Extension of contracts of officials and Members of VAD GS Section after 31 October 1920.*

6/12 ACI 804 *Demobilisation benefits for VAD GS Section and QMAAC.*

[ARMY ORDERS: Once the WAAC had become QMAAC, regulations and amendments were also given in ARMY ORDERS. (See *Army Orders 1917 - 1918*, National Army Museum.)]

ARMY ORDER 137 (May 1918) *QUEEN MARY'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS.* 'Her Majesty the Queen having been graciously pleased to assume the title and appointment of Commandant-in-Chief of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Corps will in future, in accordance with Her desire, bear the title of QMAAC'.

ARMY ORDER 189 (June 1918) 'Regulations for the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps have been approved, and copies will shortly be issued to all concerned'.

APPENDIX II

THE 'LAWS OF WAR', GENEVA CONVENTIONS AND THE RED CROSS

The 'laws of war' - the rules governing the conduct of armed conflict - are rooted in principles which have developed over centuries, but it was not until the second half of the 19th century that those principles began to be codified into formal agreements between nations. These international agreements have taken the form of declarations, conventions and protocols, the first of which was the 1856 Paris Declaration, on maritime war. Other agreements, including the Geneva Conventions, followed.¹

By the time the First World War broke out, the status in war of those who cared for the sick and wounded had been formally defined through the efforts of the International Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions during the late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. The Red Cross encouraged the increased use of women within Army medical services, and sanctioned the common view that nursing was the most important and acceptable role for women in war, and at first most women working for the war effort fitted within the category of personnel who cared for the sick and wounded. But when the War Office began seriously to consider establishing the Women's Army Corps, it was with the specific intention that women should perform work outside that category: what worried those who examined the question of the status of the women was the fact that women would *not* be protected under the terms of the existing Geneva Conventions.

The International Red Cross movement was initiated by Henry Dunant, a citizen of Geneva.² In 1859 Dunant had been an eye-witness to the battle of Solferina, when the French and Sardinians fought the Austrians, and he had been horrified by the way the wounded were left unattended, and often died through lack of adequate medical care. In 1862, his book, *A Memory of Solferino*, was published. In its conclusion, he proposed that countries should set up relief societies in peace time, which could help their Army Medical Services in war, and that nations should ratify by 'Convention' a principle to give such societies international standing. His book was discussed all

over Europe; the Geneva Society of Public Welfare took up his proposals, and on 9 February, 1863, appointed a Committee of five (including Henry Dunant himself) to examine the questions he had raised. On 17 February, 1863, this group formed itself into the *International Standing Committee for Aid to Wounded Soldiers*, who set about arranging an unofficial international conference to study ways of dealing with the inadequacy of medical services of armies in the field. Sixteen states sent representatives to the Conference at which, in October 1863, the Red Cross was founded.³

The International Conference which met in Geneva between 26 and 29 October, 1863, adopted the proposals of Dunant and the Committee, for the creation of national committees. The 1863 Conference did not deal directly with problems of international law, but by a recommendation attached to its resolutions, it had asked for the 'neutralisation' of medical personnel, as well as the wounded themselves. The Swiss Federal Council called another conference [held between 8 - 22 August, 1864]; this was attended by the representatives of the same powers who had attended the 1863 Conference. This resulted in the drawing up of the *1864 Geneva Convention*, which contained just ten Articles, and laid down the principle that members of the armed forces who were wounded or sick (and thus harmless and defenceless) must be respected and cared for without distinction of nationality; that ambulances, military hospitals and medical personnel were to be protected against hostile acts, and as a visible sign of immunity, adopt the emblem of a red cross on a white background.

The First Hague Peace Conference was held in 1899, and this led to the conclusion of three more conventions (two dealing with the laws of land and maritime war) and three declarations. In 1906 the Swiss government organised a conference to revise the *1864 Geneva Convention*. The new Convention contained 33 Articles, and was more detailed and precise than the 1864 Convention. It was stated explicitly [rather than implicitly, as in 1864] that the wounded and sick were to be 'respected and protected', and the protection to be given to medical personnel was no longer restricted to periods on duty.⁴ For the first time, the Convention recognised the cooperation of the voluntary aid societies, thus providing for the protection of

those who worked in such organisations as Voluntary Aid Detachments and Red Cross Corps during the First World War.

In 1907 the Second Hague Peace Conference was held, which led to the conclusions of 13 conventions (ten on the laws of land and maritime war) and one declaration (concerned with particular methods of conducting war). [Since then, the codification of the laws of war has continued, though no single conference since 1907 has successfully formulated as many conventions.]

Britain signed the Geneva Convention in 1865, but did not organise a national aid society until 1870, when it was prompted to do so by the war between France and Germany. The British National Society for Aid to Sick and Wounded in War was launched in August, 1870. In 1899, during the Boer War, The Central British Red Cross Committee was formed, through a combination of National Aid Society, St John's Ambulance Association and the Army Nursing Service Reserve.⁵ This apparently confused the British position within the International Red Cross community, for there seemed to be two national associations: the Central British Red Cross Committee, formed in 1899, and the National Aid Society, which called itself the British Red Cross Society. It was unclear which was the official body, and investigations concluded that neither was, so a new Red Cross authority was set up in 1905, called the British Red Cross Society, and the NAS and CBRCC were disbanded. This British Red Cross Society was officially recognised, and Field Service Regulations laid down that all offers to help the sick and wounded in the UK in war (except from the Order of St John and St Andrew's Ambulance Association) had to be submitted first to the British Red Cross, who would refer them to the Army Council. Country branches of the BRCS were formed, and in 1908 a War Office memo encouraged the new Territorial Army County Associations to work with British Red Cross Society branches.

Over the years, rules have been issued to provide increased protection to certain groups during war, including women, beyond that granted to all civilians, but determining the status of women in the armed forces in the laws of war is not straightforward. Under the 1949 *Geneva Convention IV* [Civilians] article 27(2), it was laid down that women must not be subjected to attacks on their honour, rape,

enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent attack: it is not specified whether women who are not 'civilians' are excluded from this..⁶ Also under the 1949 *Geneva Convention III* [Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War], Part II, Article 14, states that 'Women shall be treated with all the regard due to their sex and shall in all cases benefit by treatment as favourable as that granted to men'; this is a tacit acknowledgement that women assume roles in war other than as civilians or nurses.⁷

*

FOOTNOTES TO APPENDIX II

1. Adam Roberts and Richard Guelff (eds), *Documents on the Laws of War* (Oxford 1982).
2. Information about Geneva Conventions and International Red Cross comes from Jean S. Pictet, (ed), *Geneva Convention for Amelioration of Condition of Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field*, (Geneva International Committee of Red Cross, Geneva, 1952), pp. 9 - 16; D. Schindler and Juri Toman, A.W. Sighthoff-Leiden (eds) *The Laws of Armed Conflict, A Collection of Conventions, Resolutions and other Documents*, (Geneva 1973), pp. VII - XI; pp. 199 - 223; Anne Summers, *Angels and Citizens*, op. cit., pp. 134 - 7, and 166 - 71. Summers comments on the 'highly politicised' origins of the international Red Cross; it was 'national military necessity which in the first place dictated the establishment of voluntary aid societies in Germany and Austria, rather than a wave of universal compassion..'. Op. cit., p. 134. See also Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare. The Modern History of the International Law of Armed conflicts* (1983), especially Chapter 3 and chronological guide, pp. 331-2; and Ingrid Detter De Lupis, *The Law of War* (Cambridge 1987).
3. In 1880 the Red Cross became known as the International Committee of the Red Cross.
4. This was the *Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field*, signed at Geneva on 6 July 1906. It came into force on 9 August, 1907. *Laws of Armed Conflict*, op. cit., p. 223.
5. Anne Summers, op. cit.; Stella Bingham, op. cit., pp. 112, 115 - 6, 124 - 5.
6. I. Detter De Lupis, op. cit., pp. 277 - 8.
7. Roberts and Guelff, op. cit., p. 222.

APPENDIX III

THE CONUNDRUM OF 'CLASS'

Historians sometimes gloss over the complications of 'class'. For example, Gail Braybon begins her study of *Women Workers in the First World War* by explaining that she is 'mostly concerned with the position of working-class women, and thus there is no information on the work of VADS, members of the Land Army, clerks or civil servants, who were primarily middle-class'.¹ As she does not disclose how she actually ascertained the class of the women she writes about we must presume that she uses the term 'working class' to describe them because their occupations were those about which such an assumption is usually made.

Nor, indeed, does Braybon provide justification for her statement about the class background of the occupations she dismissed as 'middle-class': in fact, it seems probable that there were plenty of working-class girls and women to be found among clerical workers in early 20th century Britain. M. Mostyne Bird, writing in 1911 about clerical and secretarial work, claims that the attractiveness of office work - its clean, good conditions, regular and not over-long hours, had 'drawn a large and ever growing stream of girls from the sources that feed the channels of domestic service, dressmakers' workrooms, and even factories and shop counters',² and that the 'half-educated, half-trained and underbred elementary schoolgirl' with handwriting of a child of eight was flooding the market.³ If, as Bird suggests, there were many different grades of clerk, the girls and women who filled them are likely to have come from a range of social backgrounds; the fact that Bird considered that a Board School Education was sufficient for girls to take up shorthand and typing courses supports this view.⁴ Wages also illustrate the divisions and hierarchies that operated. According to Bird, all that a stenographer could hope to earn for a lifetime was 15s - 25s a week; 'good clerks' with 'book-keeping, and a few useful business qualifications' could command 30s - 40s a week,⁵ while secretaries might earn between £100 - £200 a year, depending upon the liberality of their employers.⁶

Meta Zimmick has described women clerical workers as 'lower middle class by ascription or birth', deemed in general to be skilful, cheap and docile by the Treasury, in its role of control of the civil service establishment.⁷ By contrast, women administrative workers - supervisory staff, inspectors, medical officers - middle middle to upper class, were more troublesome, well-educated, articulate and ambitious, and from 1870 the Treasury actively encouraged the employment of women clerical workers and discouraged women administrative workers.⁸

Class analysis based on assumptions about the background of those who belong to particular occupational categories is fraught with snags. Edward Higgs comments, for example, that the popular practice of identifying servant employment with the middle classes is 'too simplistic' for not only did families who were not middle class employ servants, but a considerable proportion of people who were recorded as in 'servant occupations' were not 'servants' in their relationship to the head of the household in which they lived, but rather, were related by kinship.⁹

Jane Lewis, in *Women in England 1870 - 1950*, points out that while she has drawn the divisions between social classes broadly 'it should be remembered that the determination of women's social class is in itself highly problematic. It cannot always be assumed that the housewife shares her husband's socio-economic class'.¹⁰ But she, too, fails to explain how she did determine the classes of the women she writes about.

Part of the difficulty arises from the fact that often there are few reliable indicators of the social background of the subjects under observation, apart from their own occupation or that of their parents or spouses. The very nature of class itself, composed as it is of numerous different facets, many of which are not identifiable through the written word, contributes to the problem of categorising social background. Oral history, perhaps, can provide more clues; no-one in this country can doubt, for example, that accent and class identification are closely linked, if sometimes misleading. In *A Woman's Place - An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890 - 1940*, Elizabeth Roberts records the difficulty of 'finding a definition of

"working-class" which accords with the empirical evidence'.¹¹ She decided that as 'a working definition of class, the most useful seems to be the one used by the respondents themselves, which related their status to their manual occupations and limited economic standing', to which she added another essential element: 'the cultural ties and shared views which united working-class people'.¹² There were divisions within the working class, between skilled and unskilled, but they were all manual workers, most were paid weekly, and they shared the attitudes of the rest of the 'respectable' working class.

Still, problems remained. Roberts explains that the respondents she had the most difficulty assigning to a class or division of the working class were shopkeepers. At one end of the spectrum were the very poor, who had no employees; at the other, prosperous shopkeepers with substantial incomes, who employed others, were undoubtedly not working class. In between were several gradations of status: what was clear was that 'becoming a shopkeeper was one way for a family to leave the working class and enter the middle class'.¹³

The conventional view that class should be assigned according to the occupation of the male head of household has long been under attack as inadequate and misleading.¹⁴ Bernard Waites confesses that he limited his own study - *A Class Society at War; England 1914 - 1918* - by his decision 'to set aside any special consideration of women in the class structure and the war's impact on their condition and experiences'.¹⁵ When he began his work, he explains, the sociological orthodoxy was that 'the horizontal divisions of class cut across the vertical divisions of sex and the class position of most women is determined by that of the male head of the family to which they belong. If the orthodoxy is sexist, this - it is claimed - is only because it accurately reflects the sexist subordination of women in our society'.¹⁶ Waites justifies his decision by his belief that the orthodoxy still seems to him 'to correspond to the brute facts of women's dependence as wives and daughters' and that 'there remain theoretical and substantive grounds for believing that the lack of special consideration of women in the class structure does not vitiate the main conclusions of his study'.¹⁷

Given the labyrinth of social class analysis and the problems involved in revising traditional theories, it seems almost reckless even to attempt to define social background in terms of class. But it can be argued that it is perfectly acceptable to use the terms 'working class' or 'middle class' without elaborate definitions, as Marwick does: he used phrases like 'upper class', 'middle class' and 'working class' from the very beginning of his book *Class - Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930*.¹⁹ Even though he had not established the validity of such terms, he assumed that readers, having grown up in the societies being studied or others like them, would have some idea of what was meant by such phrases.

Perhaps it is pedantic to question the use of such familiar terms; as Marwick points out elsewhere: 'That Edwardian and early Georgian Britain was a very rigid class society is abundantly clear from a wealth of contemporary material, even if the same material does not furnish evidence for any very precise analysis of the class structure'.²⁰ This is repeated in *Britain in a Century of Total War*, where he draws attention to the 'vast inequalities and rigid class distinctions' of Edwardian society, and claims that 'the major social fact was still the deep and recognised chasm which lay between the working class on the one side and respectable society on the other'.²⁰ In the absence of information that could only have been obtained from completed application forms of the women who were accepted into the different women's corps,²¹ it is not possible to analyse the background of the enrolled women in terms of their social class, and it is difficult to see how one can do better than to follow Marwick.

FOOTNOTES TO APPENDIX III

1. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, op. cit., p. 11.
2. M. Mostyn Bird, *Woman at Work* (1911) p. 127.
3. Ibid., p. 128.
4. Ibid., p. 134.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 141.
7. Meta Zimmick kindly made available to me an unpublished summary of a paper she produced from work carried out on an SSRC-funded archival project on Treasury papers at the Public Record Office.
8. Ibid. See also Meta Zimmeck, 'Jobs for the Girls: the Expansion of Clerical Work for Women, 1850 - 1914' in *Unequal Opportunities, Women's Employment in England 1800 - 1918*, Edited by Angela John (1986), pp. 154 - 77.
9. Edward Higgs, 'Domestic Service and Household Production' in *Unequal Opportunities*, ibid., pp. 125 - 50.
10. Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870 - 1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Sussex, 1984) p. xiii.
11. Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place, an Oral History of Working-Class women 1890 - 1940* (Oxford 1984), p. 3.
12. Ibid., p. 4.
13. Ibid., p. 6.
14. See, for example, Pamela Abbott and Roger Sapsford, *Women and Social Class* 1987, pp. 1 - 34.
15. Bernard Waites, *A Class Society at War; England 1914 - 18*, (Leamington Spa 1987), p. 6.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 7.
18. Arthur Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930* (1980) p. 12. Marwick is criticised sternly by R.S. Neale for having written that he preferred 'class' to mean what people in everyday life mean by it, rather than what Runciman or Weber tell me I should mean by it'. Marwick, ibid, p. 15. See R.S. Neale (Ed), 'Afterword', *History and Class, Essential Readings in Theory and Interpretation* (Oxford 1983), p. 273. Neale regarded this as a misleading pronouncement, far distant from Marwick's argument in practice.

19. Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge, British Society and the First World War* (1979 edition) p. 19.
20. Arthur Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War - War, Peace and Social Change 1900 - 1967* (1968), p. 37.
21. The forms were not available at IWM, PRO or the Ministry of Defence, and it seems likely that they have been destroyed. Even if they had been available, they would not have necessarily provided suitable information: the first enrolment form for the WAAC, for example, did not ask for information about either father's occupation or the current or past occupations of the applicant. A revised application form [for Members] for applicants to any of the three services did request details about current employment, and the nature of the post held, education, and father's occupation, in addition to the usual request for information about nationality of parents, and the forms for WREN officers also required much more detail.

APPENDIX IV

SECOND-LIEUTENANT BARRRETT v MRS CORNWALLIS-WEST

The brief outlines of the case are that Mrs Cornwallis-West (aged 63) made advances to a young sergeant, Patrick Barrett, (aged 26) of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. In her initial enthusiasm for the young man, Mrs Cornwallis-West pressed for him to obtain a Commission; Barrett was also strongly recommended by his Commanding Officer and others, and he was gazetted for a commission on 24 December, 1915. After this, things began to go sour. According to the report of a Court of Enquiry, which later investigated the case: 'probably from this time, and certainly later, Mrs Cornwallis-West began to take a more than ordinary interest in Mr Barrett, to which he consistently failed to respond'. In February, 1916, Barrett wrote Mrs West 'a letter of remonstrance'; this rebuff deeply antagonised the lady, and she complained of Barrett's 'ungentlemanly conduct' to his Commanding Officer, Lt.-Colonel Delmé-Radcliffe, who, under some pressure from Mrs Cornwallis-West, decided to apply for Barrett's transfer to another battalion, and thus have him removed from the locality.

Delmé-Radcliffe made no attempt to find out from Barrett his version of what had happened, and censured Barrett publicly on a couple of occasions. When Mrs Cornwallis-West learned that Barrett's friends were taking action on his behalf in the matter, she appealed to Sir John Cowans. By this time Barrett, his health impaired, had been posted to the 3rd Battalion; though apparently it had come about in the ordinary course of events, he viewed the order to transfer as an official endorsement of his Commanding Officer's censure, and was determined to try and vindicate himself. At this point Violet Markham's brother, Sir Arthur Markham, took up the case, and insisted on an enquiry into the action of the Generals involved. Though some effort was made to keep the affair secret, inevitably it leaked out. On 2 August, 1916, Frances Stevenson noted in her diary: 'There is in formation at the War Office a first class scandal...'.²

On 8 August, 1916, Sir Arthur Markham died. Attempts were made to persuade Lloyd George, as Secretary of State for War, to drop the

enquiry but Lloyd George refused; he took steps to deal with the case by Court of Enquiry, applied to Parliament for the requisite legislation, and as a result, the *Army (Courts of Enquiry) Act* was passed into law.³ Stevenson noted that when, at the King's request, Lloyd George described to him Cowans' part in the affair, the King laughed heartily and remarked, 'They tell me that he is a trifle fond of the ladies'; to which LG replied that the ladies were certainly fond of him.⁴

The Cornwallis-West case dragged on through Lloyd George's term at the War Office, and gave Cowans considerable cause for concern. On 20 November, 1916, Frances Stevenson wrote:

The Report on the Barrett v. Cornwallis-West case is finished, and things look black for Sir John Cowans. It shows clearly that he used his influence to grant the request of this society woman to gratify her anger against an innocent boy whom she had wronged. D. says that it will not be possible to keep him [Cowans]. He says it cannot be tolerated that a Member of the Army Council should use his position in this way and allow himself to come under the influence of such a woman for the purpose of interfering with the career of 'the man at the bottom', as D. expresses [it]. I feel sorry for Cowans, as he seems to have been bothered and pestered by this woman until he got sick of the whole thing and wanted to finish it. How he will hate and despise Mrs C.W. in future. It is she who will have ruined his career and good name.⁵

Others too, believed that the affair would affect Cowans' position. General Haig recorded in his diary that Lord Derby thought that Cowans 'must go as a result of his letters to Mrs West'.⁶ On 25 November Haig wrote that Cowans 'had by his conduct in writing to Mrs West and assuring her of his firm support before the case in question had come before the Army Council, forfeited his good name for honest dealing, and so could not remain on the Army Council'.⁷ At this time Haig said he would be glad to employ Cowans in France, as he believed he was 'an able officer', but later he seems to have gone back on this offer. According to a confidential letter from Lord Derby to Haig, Lloyd George offered, through a third party, that if Cowans resigned he could have Maxwell's place in France, whereupon Cowans handed in his resignation.⁸ Derby informed Haig that it was impossible to go back on that now, but that he could not ask Haig to get rid of Maxwell, just to provide a place for Cowans. Derby insisted that

Geddes⁹ had wrongly prejudiced Haig against Cowans; that the latter was 'very easy to deal with', with 'plenty of resources and is always ready to fall in with any suggestion which may improve the working of his Branch'.¹⁰ Derby left it that as long as Haig wished to retain Maxwell in France, he should, and only when he wanted a change should he take on Cowans. Haig recorded in his diary that no change was desirable for at least three months; in the event, Cowans remained at his post as Quartermaster-General at the War Office.

The Enquiry into the Barrett/Cornwallis-West case was held at the Guildhall, Westminster, in September and October 1916, and the report was published early in January, 1917.¹¹ The report judged that the correspondence between Cowans and Mrs Cornwallis-West indicated on the part of Sir John Cowans 'not merely indiscretion, but a departure from official propriety'.¹² It ruled that Barrett's Commanding Officer had 'treated Second-Lieutenant Barrett unjustly by censuring him without giving him full opportunity of justifying his conduct' and it censured Lt.-Col. Delmé Radcliffe and claimed that he 'showed a want of consideration and humanity' in ordering Barrett to 'proceed forthwith to Litherland at a time when he had good reason to know that the officer in question was so ill that he could not be moved'.¹³

The Court of Enquiry rejected the rumour which had spread, that the attempt to transfer Barrett to the 3rd Battalion had been done for the purpose of getting him sent to the front and 'of so effectively obtaining his removal'. But Delmé-Radcliffe had 'acted hastily, harshly and improperly'; and it was regretted that 'under the influence of a lady of position in the county, he allowed himself to deny justice to one of his own junior officers'.¹⁴

The Enquiry concluded that Barrett entirely merited being granted a commission in December 1915, and that there had 'been nothing in his conduct since that date which has been in any way unbecoming an officer and a gentleman; and that any censure which has been passed upon him in connection with the circumstances of this case has been wholly undeserved'.¹⁵

As for Mrs Cornwallis-West, the members of the Enquiry claimed that she had exaggerated the influence she had over Cowans, but they had no doubt that 'her injudicious boasting of the power she wielded

at the WO' was confirmed by the wording in Cowans' letters; this was calculated to bring him and the administration at the WO into disrepute. The report concluded that it felt:

obliged to record our opinion that this lady's conduct, as revealed in this case, has been highly discreditable, both in her behaviour towards 2nd-Lt. Barrett before his letter of 14th February, in her vindictive attempts to injure him afterwards, and in the untruthful evidence she gave before us. It appeared in evidence before us that this lady holds positions of some importance in the county of Denbighshire in various associations of a public character for assisting in war work. In our opinion it is to be regretted that she should hold such positions'.¹⁶

It has been suggested that incidents such as the Cornwallis-West affair were not uncommon during the war in all countries; that among the 'upper classes' especially, there were a great many women who 'had influence in military circles, and were in a position to promote or ruin the career of a young officer', by punishing them if they refused an 'amorous association'.¹⁷ Such episodes may have coloured the attitudes of some officers towards voluntary help; the response was not always approving. At the end of December, 1914, Sir A. Keogh, Director of the Royal Army Medical Corps, complained to Lt. General Sir Ronald Maxwell, who was at that time Inspector of General Communications with the British Expeditionary Force, that though they did not dislike Voluntary Hospitals, they did

dislike the lay element in them, their indiscipline, their quarrels, the class of people, who are attracted to France by them. Lord K. authorises me to move with regard to them after the 31st January [1915] and I will certainly do so. I am myself a strong believer in voluntary aid. Opposition is one thing, Control another - I think we should take all these over, or let the Red Cross Society do so, place them under military Control and run them exactly as our hospitals are run.¹⁸

Maxwell replied that what Keogh wanted was what they had all along been trying to do: put all Voluntary Hospitals under the Red Cross, and the new Commissioner for the Red Cross, Sir Courtauld Thompson, was quite agreeable.¹⁹ The desire on the part of the authorities to take control of voluntary organisations was justifiable; lack of central control often created problems, especially in France.²⁰

1. *Reports of the Court of Enquiry*, 2 January, 1917, Cd. 8435, Prefatory Note, Case No. I, p. 3.
2. Frances Stevenson Diaries, 2 August, 1916, op. cit., p. 111.
3. *Reports of the Court of Enquiry*, Cd. 8435, op. cit., p. 3.
4. Frances Stevenson Diaries, 8 August, 1916, op. cit., p. 113.
5. Ibid., 20 November 1916, pp. 124 - 5.
6. Diaries of Haig, 1 November - 31 December 1916, entry for 24 November, 1916, PRO WO256/14.
7. Ibid., entry for 25 November 1916.
8. Ibid., copy of letter from Derby to Haig, 20 December 1916. Lt. Gen. Sir Ronald Maxwell was then QMG in France; he replaced Sir William Robertson in 1915.
9. Eric Geddes; Director of Transportation in France at this time.
10. Haigh Diaries, Derby to Haig, 20 December 1916, op. cit.
11. *Reports of the Court of Enquiry*, op. cit.
12. Ibid., p. 5.
13. Ibid., p. 6.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 6.
16. Ibid.
17. Fischer and Dubois, op. cit., pp. 80 - 1,
18. Keogh, 30 December 1914, PRO WO107/14, No. 152. Lt. Gen. Sir Ronald Maxwell had written to Cowans about the Voluntary Hospitals; Cowans passed on Keogh's reply to the Inspector of General Communications. 'Lord K' is a reference to Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War.
19. Maxwell to Cowans, 2 January 1915, PRO WO107/14, No. 153.
20. In April 1915 Cowans wrote to Maxwell (who had by then replaced Sir William Roberston as QMG) and told him that Lord Kitchener 'wanted something done about clearing the ladies out of Boulogne'. Cowans, QMG to Maxwell, QMG France, 10 April 1915, PRO WO107/14. Maxwell told him that officers could have their wives with them on the Lines of Communications, if they were sick or wounded; this was later denied by Lt. Gen. Sir Frederick Clayton. Clayton, IGC to Cowans, 17 April 1915, Ibid, 267A.

APPENDIX V

VENEREAL DISEASE AND THE ARMED FORCES

During the Crimean War increasing attention had been drawn to the problem of venereal disease [VD] among troops, and a number of medical and military authorities began to feel that something needed to be done about its high incidence which, it was claimed, was detrimental to national defence.¹ Between 1864 - 1869 the *Contagious Diseases Acts* were passed, which introduced legislation to control VD among the armed forces. Under the Acts, prostitutes living in certain designated towns were subject to arrest, and required to undergo compulsory medical examination 'in the belief that regulating and inspecting prostitutes was the most effective method in controlling venereal disease itself'.² The *Contagious Diseases Acts* were unpopular, and protests led eventually to their repeal in 1886, after which the civilian authorities tried to deal with prostitutes through the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* of 1885, which enabled police to take measures against brothels, but neither transmission of VD or prostitution were recognised as crimes. There was no legislation to allow for prosecution, and prostitutes could only be arrested if they indulged in 'indecent behaviour', or created a public nuisance. Police became increasingly reluctant to take any action after a case in 1887, when a dressmaker who had been arrested for soliciting denied the charge.³ Led by some Liberal members of parliament, the House of Commons forced the government to hold an investigation, which resulted in a policeman being tried for perjury. Though he was acquitted, for the next two decades prostitutes were left largely unchecked, but still a decline of VD was recorded in both the Army and Navy, and it tended to be regarded as a civilian rather than a military problem.

By the turn of the century alarm about the effects of VD had become widespread. In 1899 the International Conference on Prostitution and VD was held in Brussels, and from that time VD was a matter of concern amongst medical and social workers all over Europe, who worked to discover an effective treatment. In Britain in 1912 the Royal Society of Medicine appointed a 'Commission of Investigation into the Prevalence of Venereal Diseases', but the topic was still

regarded as not suitable for public discussion. In the same year, the Local Government Board appointed an officer, Dr R.W. Johnstone, to make a limited inquiry into the control of VD, with special reference to the adequacy of the measures and treatment available, and in his report Johnstone claimed that 12% of the population of London was syphilitic.⁴ The 17th International Medical Congress, held in August 1913, gave prominence to the subject of venereal disease.⁵ A report on the Congress described how there was now a 'well-established method of diagnosis, and an acknowledged instrument of cure, at least in the early stages, of a disease which has for four centuries spoilt our civilisation'.⁶ The author claimed that if every recent case could be induced to come for a cure, syphilis would be rooted out in a year'.⁷

In July 1913 the *Morning Post* published a letter signed by leading doctors, which asked that a Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases be appointed.⁸ It criticised the 'conspiracy of silence' as regards venereal disease, and claimed that in London alone 40,000 new cases appeared each year, while in the United Kingdom as a whole there had been 130,000 new cases. Diagnosis and treatment had improved in recent years, and now it was time to organise to reduce the incidence of VD. The letter appealed to the public to demand the appointment of a Royal Commission into the matter. The letter drew public attention, and Asquith, the Prime Minister at the time, promised a Commission, which was formally appointed on 1 November, 1913. The Royal Commission's *Final Report* was published in February, 1916, and as a result of its recommendations, the National Council for Combatting Venereal Disease [NCCVD] was set up that year, and the Chairman of the Commission, Lord Sydenham, was invited to become its president.⁹

The 1916 report stated that while available statistics gave no satisfactory evidence of the prevalence of venereal disease, it was estimated that in large cities at least 10% of the population were affected by syphilis, and many more by gonorrhoea. Treatment in most cases was unduly deferred, while adequate facilities for the best modern treatment did not exist at all, and the Commission recommended that facilities for diagnosis and free treatment for VD should be organised by the larger local authorities, advertisements for remedies

for VD should be prohibited, and there should be more careful instruction with regard to moral conduct.

According to the 1916 report, though the total number of infected persons had increased, there was no reason to believe that the percentage of infection in naval and military forces was greater than in normal times, and it claimed that the military authorities were doing their utmost to provide treatment.¹⁰ Shortly after the publication of the report, the Army issued an *Order* to its Commands, informing them that the Army Council was considering the question of prevalence and prevention of venereal diseases.¹¹ The *Order* was emphatic that the Army Council could not accept suggestions made with regard to prevention of venereal disease which would imply the adoption of any system of prophylaxis, which might be said to 'afford opportunities for unrestrained vice'.¹²

As a result of the debate at the Imperial War Conference in April, 1917, about the consequences of prostitution on the health of troops, the Colonial Office began to put pressure on the War Office to take action; it wanted to be able to tell Dominion governments that something was being done to give effect to the resolution passed by the Conference.¹³ It reminded the Army Council that it was a question to which the Dominion governments attached 'the very greatest importance', and that in Australia, at least, it had had a detrimental effect on recruiting. On 3 August there was an interdepartmental Conference at the Home Office to consider the problem of 'The Protection of Oversea Troops from Venereal Disease', at which it was decided that the best hope of improving the situation lay in developing the agencies which already existed for educating both the civil and military population, for treating affected persons before they could communicate the disease, and for the provision of prophylactic measures against infection.¹⁴

Those attending the conference agreed that if it were possible to secure the general adoption of simple preventative and prophylactic measures by persons who could not be restrained, then this would lead to a great improvement, but when the War Office received a final report on the Conference, its response was hostile to this suggestion.¹⁵ Despite recognising that the consensus of the Committee

had been that the best hope for improving the present state of affairs was to provide prophylactic treatment against infection, and that the Conference had agreed to secure such measures if possible, the War Office insisted that 'under no circumstances should that view be presented to the Colonial Office for transmission to the Dominions as being the opinion of the Army Council'; indeed, the Colonial Office should be informed 'that the Army Council cannot under any circumstances countenance the issue of prophylactics to British troops'.¹⁶ As a result, the Colonial Office could only write to the Dominions that 'Educational propaganda' was the best measure for alleviating the evil'.¹⁷

The matter did not rest there. The Americans enquired into what action the British were taking, and a conference was held at the Colonial Office on 7 December, at which the controversial draft DORA 40(d) was proposed.¹⁸ The Home Office representative explained that existing Defence of the Realm Regulations Nos. 13(a) and 35(c) gave the authorities certain powers as regards exclusion of women from the camps, and that what Sir George Cave, the Home Secretary, had in mind when he called the meeting together was an additional Regulation on the lines of Clause 5 of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, then before the House of Commons.¹⁹

The proposed draft regulation stated, first, that no sailor or soldier who was suffering from VD in a communicable form should have sexual intercourse with any woman, or solicit or invite any woman to have sexual intercourse with him, and secondly, that no woman suffering from a venereal disease in a communicable form should have sexual intercourse with any sailor or soldier, or solicit or invite any sailor or soldier to have sexual intercourse with her. The regulation was altered after opposition from the War Office, who objected to the fact that it should apply to soldiers and sailors, but not men in general, and thought that it should refer to any 'Male Person'.²⁰ The Home Office considered that it would be impossible from a parliamentary view point to defend the introduction of a general principle by way of a DORA,²¹ and the solution agreed to was to drop any reference to soldiers and sailors with VD, and make DORA 40(d) apply to women only.²²

At a meeting of the War Cabinet on 22 February, 1918, after discussing a paper written by the Secretary of State for Colonies on 'Venereal Diseases', the Cabinet approved a regulation under the Defence of the Realm Act.²³

The War Cabinet was warned that objections to the Regulation might well be raised in Parliament, on the grounds that the penalties imposed applied only to women and not to men, and that demands might be made that the offence should be reciprocal to both sexes, but it continued to insist that it was not possible to deal with the male civilian population by means of a Defence of the Realm Act.²⁴ Further attempts to persuade the Cabinet to reconsider the matter by Sir George Cave²⁵ - who did not wish to have responsibility for defending the Regulation in its existing form - failed, and on 13 March the War Cabinet reaffirmed its approval.²⁶ The warnings that objections might be raised were fully justified.²⁷

FOOTNOTES TO APPENDIX V

1. Suzann Buckley, 'The failure to resolve the problem of venereal disease among the troops in Britain during World War I', in Brian Bond and Ian Roy (eds), *War and Society. A Yearbook of Military History*, Vol. 2 (1977), p. 65.
2. Bridget A. Towers, 'Health Education Policy 1916 - 1926: Venereal Disease and the Prophylaxis Dilemma', in *Medical History*, 24 (1980) p. 73. The French *maisons tolérées* operated on the same assumption.
3. The Cass Case, see Buckley, op. cit., p. 66.
4. Douglas White, 'Eugenics and Venereal Disease, With special reference to the Medical Congress (August 1913) and the recent Report issued by the Local Government Board', *Eugenics Review* No. V., p. 268. Towers points out that official figures relating to the extend of VD in the population during this period were extremely unreliable, and still cause debate. Towers, op. cit., p. 73.
5. White, *ibid.*, p. 265.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Morning Post*, 22 July 1913.
9. Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, *Final Report of the Commissioners*, 11 Feburary 1916, Cmd. 8189, 1916.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Army Order (B.B. Cubitt to the GO, Commanding in Chief, Commands at Home. The GO Commanding Districts at Home). 24/Gen No./4812 (AMD2) WO. PRO WO32/5597.
12. 'Prophylaxis' is normally defined as meaning the preventative treatment of disease, but the manner in which the word was often used at this time reflects the ambiguous attitude that many felt toward the treatment of venereal disease. Towers points out that in the context of the First World War: '"Prophylaxis"... came to have a more specific meaning of methods that could be used (disinfectants - potassium permanganate, calomel, etc.) immediately after intercourse to ensure that infection did not occur. There are a few occasions when the sheath is also defined as a prophylactic measure against venereal disease. But it generally meant some form of immediate disinfection'. Towers, op. cit., p. 72, fn 5. The Army Council's objection to prophylaxis in 1916 seems to refer to the meaning of the word in its conventional sense; that is, meaning treatment *before* the event, rather than after. The *Order* issued in March stated that the 'inculcation of temperance, and of a knowledge of the

immediate and remote consequences of venereal diseases form the best foundations for prophylaxis' - but it went on to insist that in every barracks and camp there should be a system established under which soldiers who had exposed themselves to the dangers of venereal infection should be required to attend for treatment within 24 hours of being infected. The Army Council thus distinguished between prophylaxis *before* the event, and prophylaxis *after* the event: while the former was unacceptable, the latter could be justified, to its satisfaction, at least. It was this attitude which was regarded as hypocritical by those who believed that providing prophylaxis measures *before* sexual intercourse had taken place was infinitely more effective, and should be generally adopted as official policy.

13. Lambert, Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office, to Secretary, War Office, 7 August, 1917, PRO WO32/11401.
14. 3 August, 1917, Conference (4A); R.H. Brade to U.S. of State, Colonial Office, 3 September, 1917, *ibid*.
15. War Office (probably Brig. Childs) to Sir Edward Troup, Home Office, 16 September 1917, PRO WO32/11401.
16. *Ibid*.
17. Venereal Disease, Admiralty and Home Office Proposals, 25 January 1918, 27A Minute Sheet, *ibid*.
18. Draft Minutes of an Inter-Departmental Conference held at the Colonial Office, to consider the question of the protection of Oversea Troops from Venereal Disease, 7 December 1917, *ibid*.
19. See Buckley, *op. cit.*, pp. 70 - 1.
20. DPS to AG, 26 January 1918; R.H. Brade, WO to U.S. of State, Colonial Office, 28 January 1918, PRO WO 32/11401.
21. Walter Long to RH Earl of Derby, 30 January 1918, 27C, *ibid*.
22. Henry Lambert, US of S, Colonial Office, to Sec. of WO, 6 February, 1918, 27F; US of S, Colonial Office to Sec., WO, 12 February 1918, 27G; Home Office to Creedy, 4 March 1918; Lord Derby to Cave, Home Office, 4 March 1918, PRO WO 32/11401.
23. Paper GT 3598 (Memorandum by Secretary of State for Colonies), 12 February 1918, PRO CAB 24/41.
24. Whether or not DORA could have been applied more widely is not clear. In August 1918, when the Imperial War Cabinet reconsidered Section 40D of DORA, Lord Reading stated that he did not wish to offer any formal opinion as to whether the civilian population could or could not be embraced in a regulation under the Defence of the Realm Acts, but that it would be difficult to pass and enforce a regulation which the Law Officers had already decided to be illegal. [Minute 13, p.

5, WC 461, IWC 33, 20 August 1918, PRO CAB 23/7]. Reading said that it would probably be urged that the Government was doing under the DORA what ought to be done under Statute, and that 'from the political standpoint the proposal to extend the present powers by Regulation instead of by Statute, so as to bring every man under the Regulation, would...greatly increase the present agitation, and enable evil-disposed women to resort to blackmail'. At this meeting, the Imperial War Cabinet decided that the 'Law Officers of the Crown should be asked to advise the Government on the question of extending Regulation 40D to civilian population generally'. [Ibid]. A week later the matter was discussed again, and Sir Gordon Hewart, who replied on this occasion, said he did not think the difficulties of extending the Regulation to the civilian population were serious. [28 August 1918, Item 4 WC 465, PRO CAB 23/7.] It had been held by the Courts that whether a Regulation was reasonably necessary was a question of fact to be determined by a jury, and Hewitt presumed the authors of Regulation 40D had satisfied themselves it was reasonably necessary. Its extension, therefore, was a matter of *policy*, and it should not be palpably more difficult to defend the Regulation when extended, than when, as now, it applied only to women. The War Cabinet of 28 August decided that, subject to the approval of the Prime Minister, submission should be made to the King to appoint a Royal Commission to consider Regulation 40D, what amendments were desirable, and especially the advisability of extending it to the civilian population. [Item 11, 3 October 1918, WC 482, PRO CAB 23/8]. This action was overtaken by events, however; a minute dated 22 November, 1918, reported that the Cabinet Committee which was considering the immediate cancellation of Regulations and Orders under the Defence of the Realm Act which could be dispensed with at once, had decided to abolish Regulation 40D if the War Office agreed, and that seems to have been the end of the matter. [R. Brade, WO, to AG and US of State, 22 November 1918, PRO WO32/47450.

25. G. Cave, Home Office, 'Venereal Disease', GT 3812, 5 March 1918, PRO CAB 24/44.
26. WC 365, Item 14, Venereal Diseases, PRO CAB 23/5.
27. RH G.N. Barnes, 'Defence of the Realm Act. Reg. 40D', 26 July 1918, PRO CAB 24/59. Barnes said that since the Regulation had been brought into operation he had received numerous resolutions protesting against it. See also PRO WO32/11403.

TABLES

TABLE 1. Estimated Increase in the Number of Women employed since the War in Main Occupations in the United Kingdom*

	Estimated Numbers employed July 1914		Increase in the No. of Females employed since July 1914,	
	Males,	Females	April 1916	July 1916
Industrial occups,	6,165,000	2,117,000	275,000	362,000
Commercial occups,	1,073,000	454,000	166,000	198,000
Prof. occups,	144,000	67,500	13,000	15,000
Banking and Finance	176,000	9,500	23,000	30,000
Hotels, Public-houses, Cinemas, Theatres etc	177,000	175,000	12,000	19,000
Agriculture (GB) ¹	920,000	130,000	-14,000	66,000
Transport (not Municipal)	1,041,000	15,000	23,000	31,000
Civil Service	240,000	66,000	39,000	48,000
Arsenals, Dockyards etc. ²	71,000	2,000	25,000	69,000
Local Govt. (including teachers, Transport Workers under Munic- ipal Authorities)	477,000	184,000	21,000	28,000
TOTALS;	10,484,000	3,220,000	585,000	866,000

¹ In agriculture the number of women employed is always much greater in July than in April. The decrease shown for April 1916 is due to the fact that a comparison is made with July 1914. If a comparison were made with April 1914 an increase and not a decrease would appear.

² Including National shell, filling and projectile factories.

*From: *Board of Trade REPORT ON THE INCREASED EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN DURING THE WAR (1916) Table 1, p. 8.*

TABLE 2:

Expansion of female labour force during 1st World War*

Year	Men recruited into the Forces	Additional Women Employed
July 1914 - 15	2,200,000	382,000
July 1915 - 16	1,014,000	563,000
July 1916 - 17	1,046,000	511,000
July 1917 - 18	636,000	203,000

* Source: H. Wolfe, *Labour Supply and Regulation* (Oxford, 1923) pp. 169, 171, quoted in S. Heller Hogg, 'The Employment of Women in Great Britain 1891 - 1921',

TABLE 3: Recruitment by Employment Exchanges

*Figures from Nov. 1920 REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY INTO WORK OF EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGES - Cmd. 1054, 1920, p. 6. [IWM EMP 19/6].

<i>Approximate figures (recruited by Employment Exchanges)*</i>		<i>Approximate Nos serving in Women's Corps at 30/8/18**</i>
QMAAC	43,700	50,000
WRNS.	700	2,000
WRAF	16,300	18,000
TOTAL	60,700	70,000
	=====	=====

** Figures supplied by Ministry of National Service, PRO NATS 1/76.

TABLE 4 : QUEEN MARY'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS

*Strength by Months**

Date	Officers	Other Ranks		TOTAL
		Abroad	At Home	
<hr/>				
1917				
August	2,377
September	...	2,280	815	3,095
October	...	2,900	2,340	5,240
November	462	3,496	12,310	16,228
December	397	4,105	15,696	20,198
1918				
January	456	4,779	17,244	22,479
June	925	7,629	26,676	35,230
November	1,077	8,548	31,850	40,850
1919				
January	1,081	8,037	28,875	37,993
June	782	6,979	17,278	25,039
December	208	1,876	1,451	3,535
1920				
January	67	281	231	579
April**	28	61	195	284

** On 1st May, 1920, the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps ceased to exist. Two officials and 63 other ranks were to be retained with D.G.R. and E. at St. Pol until 31st July, 1920.

* Figures taken from *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War, 1914 - 1920*, (War Office March 1922), p. 206.

TABLE 5 : Number of Women Employed with the British Expeditionary Force, France, 3rd August, 1918.*

1. Nursing sisters and others working for the RAMC

	Nurses. VADs		General Service VADs	Others	Total
British	2,396	1,685	862	..	4,943
Colonial	1,298	34	..	6	1,388
American	807	14	..	21	842
Totals	4,501	1,733	862	27	7,123

2. Nursing sisters and other workers in the British Red Cross Society

	Nurses	VADs	Others	Totals.
British Red Cross Soc.	216	592	54	862
St. John. Amb. Brig.				
Hospital	55	26	..	81
Friends Ambulance Unit	14	21	..	35
FANY Corps	..	18	98	116
Totals	285	657	152	1,094

3. QUEEN MARY'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS 7,808**

4. Societies which employ women:

YMCA	571
Church Army	77
Soldiers' Christian Association	54
Salvation Army	150
Other institutions	204

TOTALS 1,056
=====

**** Includes 31 with the American Expeditionary Force**

* (From *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War, 1914 - 1920*, HMSO, War Office (1922))

TABLE 6: WOMEN'S ROYAL NAVAL SERVICE

[Source: DD WRNS to 2nd Sea Lord, 25 June 1919, IWM WRNS 7/15
(in reply to question in Parliament as to numerical strength of ranks and ratings WRNS on
Nov 1st 1918 and June 1st 1919).]

	1 Nov, 1918	1 June 1919
OFFICERS	450	311
Ratings	5,578	2,549
TOTAL	6,028	2,860
	=====	=====

=====

GENERAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION [Source: IWM WRNS 9/4]

London First Division WRNS - Div. Office opened 14 Jan, 1918;
Preliminary visit of survey was on 28 Nov, 1917;
Mediterranean Division; opened 3 July 1918; closed 21 Oct 1919.

OFFICERS WRNS : No. appointed during entire Service : TOTAL = 608

composed of

HQ Staff	40
Outport. Admin.	244
Non Admin.	231
In training (appt. not confirmed)	68
	=====
TOTAL	583
Including VAD	25
TOTAL	608
	=====

RATINGS WRNS : No. enrolled during First World War : TOTAL = 6,880

Categories:	Mobile	Immobile	TOTALS
A. Clerical	805	1,630	2,436
B. Domestic	1,527	552	2,079
C. Garage	201	156	357
D. General unskilled	55	414	469
E. Postal	202	197	399
F. Miscellaneous	9	43	52
G. Technical	203	844	1,047
H. Signals	38	3	41
TOTAL	3,040	3,840	6,880
	=====	=====	=====

TABLE 7. STATISTICS ON WOMEN'S WORK IN WAR
*(figures provided by Ministry of National Service,
 A. Corseilis, 14 May, 1918, PRO NATS 1/76)*

Approximate nos. of women serving in various corps at 14 May 1918.

QMAAC	-	-	50,000
WRNS	-	-	2,000
WRAF	<i>(estimate; returns not yet in)</i>		10,000
Women's Legion (including ASC but excluding RFC MT Section)	-	-	1,500
VAD (GS Section) Posted from Devonshire House only, and excluding those recruited and posted from County Directors and Scotland and Ireland	-	-	5,030
Land Army	-	-	15,000

=====.
*'Women in Uniform' at 30 August, 1918**

QMAAC	-	50,000	
WRNS	-	2,000	
WRAF	-	18,000	_____
TOTAL	-		70,000
Women's Legion (MT Section) including ASC but excluding RAF	-		1,500
NURSES:			
WO, Admiralty and Territorial Hospitals		12,000	
Red Cross Hospitals		27,000	
VAD (General Service Section)		5,000	44,000
VAD Auxiliary (unpaid)	-		80,000
LAND ARMY	-		15,000

TOTAL	-	-	210,500 =====

* Above are in uniforms which are officially recognised and with the exception of VAD Auxiliaries are whole-time workers, but in addition there are large numbers of uniformed women, many of them part-time workers, in such services as the Canteen Workers, Women's Emergency Corps, Women Police, Green Cross, Masseuses' Corps, etc., the numbers of which cannot be ascertained with any degree of accuracy.

APPENDIX VII

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

[The information in the following notes was obtained from various sources, but I have depended heavily upon the following: Olive Banks, The Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists, Vol. 1 - 1800 - 1930 (Brighton 1985); Dr F. Prochuska (ed), The Europa Biographical Dictionary of British Women; The Dictionary of National Biography. In some cases there is very little, or no, biographical information, while in others there is a great deal; I have not attempted to keep the entries uniform.]

*

Lt. Col. Viscount ACHESON (Archibald Charles Montagu Brabazon - 5th Earl of Gosford). In 1918 he was appointed Assistant Adjutant-General, and succeeded to the head of AGXI after Lt. Col. Corsellis moved to the Ministry of National Service.

Dame Lilian BARKER (1874 - 1955). Daughter of a London tobacconist; received an elementary education, and attended teacher training college. By 1914 she was Principal of the London County Council Women's Institute in Marylebone. During the First World War she first organised the training of cooks for the army, and in 1915 was appointed Lady Superintendent at Woolwich Arsenal (in charge of 30,000 women workers). In 1923 she became governor of Aylesbury Borstal Institute for Girls, where she remained until 1935, when, as the first woman Assistant Commissioner for Prisons, she became responsible for all women's prisons in England and Wales, until her retirement in 1943.

Sir Reginald BRADE (? - 1935). Was Secretary of the War Office between 1914 - 1920. In this role he was Secretary to the Army Council, and in general control of War Office procedure, including the issue of all orders of the Army Council and the parliamentary business of the office.

Mrs Florence BURLEIGH LEACH [Later known as **Dame Florence SIMPSON DBE.**] was appointed Commandant of the Women's Legion Cookery Section in December 1915; Controller of Inspection in the WAAC, 1917 - 18; took over from Mrs Chalmers Watson as Chief Controller, and then Controller-in-Chief, QMAAC, 1918 - 19.

Alexandra Mary [Mona] CAMPBELL-CHALMERS WATSON (1872 - 1936). In 1917 was appointed the first Chief Controller of the WAAC. Daughter of Nellie Anderson, and cousin of Dr Louisa Garrett Anderson, whose mother, Dr Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, was the first woman to qualify as a doctor in Britain in 1865 (by qualifying to practice medicine through the Society of Apothecaries). In 1871 Elizabeth Garrett married James Skelton Anderson of the Orient Shipping Line. Mona was thus also related to **Millicent FAWCETT**. She was the first woman MD to graduate from Edinburgh University, and researched and published articles on the effects of food on body structure and the health of animals. She was the sister of Sir Auckland Geddes and Sir Eric Geddes, and was married to Sir Douglas Chalmers Watson.

Lillian CLAPHAM. A Civil Servant, in charge of the Women's War Service Register under the Board of Trade and Ministry of Labour. Katherine Furse asked to 'borrow' her to work with the VADs at Devonshire House, as a link with the government recruiting agency. Furse describes her as 'an able and generous woman'. Clapham became a Principal Officer in the Women's Section of the National Service Department.

Lt. Col. A.H.W. CORSELLIS. In April 1917 he replaced Leigh Wood as Assistant Adjutant General in charge of AGXI, the section of the Adjutant General's office responsible for the organisation and administration of WAAC. Was then appointed Deputy Director General, responsible to the Director General of the National Labour Supply, for all questions concerning control of recruiting of women. As Assistant Adjutant General he received £800 a year salary; the Minister of National Service thought he should get £1,000 a year.

General Sir John Steven COWANS (1862 - 1921) Quartermaster-General to the Forces from 1912 until his retirement in 1919. Had been 2nd Lt. in the Rifle Brigade in 1881; Colonel by 1903, Major General, 1910. Was Director-General of Territorial Force from 1910 - 1912. [See *Appendix IV.*]

Lady Gertrude CRAWFORD. The daughter of the fourth Earl of Sefton; in 1905 she married Lt. Col. J.H. Crawford of the Indian Army. Engaged in munitions work from the beginning of the war, she was a master turner. Appointed Chief Superintendent of the Women's Royal Air Force, on 23 February, 1918; was asked to resign her post at the end of March 1918. She had been working as the sole Inspecting Officer of Women's Work in the Shipyard Labour Department of the Admiralty, since May 1917. Described by Dr Letitia Fairfield as 'aristocratic, intellectual and practical'.

Rachel CROWDY (1884 - 1964). Commandant of VAD in France during the First World War. Trained as a nurse at Guy's Hospital. In 1911 she joined the Red Cross Volunteers, where she met Katherine Furse. In 1914 she was appointed Principal Commandant of VADs in France and Belgium; created DBE at the end of the war. Worked for League of Nations until 1931, and at the time was apparently the only woman to head an administrative section.

The Hon. Violet DOUGLAS-PENNANT (? - 1945). Appointed Commandant of the Women's Royal Air Force, in 1918. The 6th daughter of George Sholto Gordon Douglas-Pennant (Lord Penrhyn), a Welsh peer. Before the war she was a prominent member of the London County Council Education Committee, and numerous other committees; she was active in girls' clubs. [She published an impressive list of her public works; see *Under the Searchlight*, op. cit.] In November 1911 she was appointed a National Health Insurance Commissioner in Wales, with a salary of £1,000; she worked there until May 1918, when she was 'loaned' from the NHIC to head the WRAF; she was told to resign her post in September, 1918. She spoke at recruiting meetings for the women's services before her appointment to the WRAF. After her unfortunate dismissal, Violet spent the rest of her life trying to clear her name. Described as 'strikingly beautiful...with velvety eyes and great charm of manner'.

Earl of DERBY (1865 - 1948). Secretary of State for War at the time the WAAC was set up. Brother to Sir Arthur Stanley of the BRCS; the eldest son of Frederick Arthur Stanley, the 16th Earl of Derby. He entered public life in 1892 as Conservative member for West Houghton division of Lancashire. In 1915 he was appointed Director of Recruiting, and introduced the 'Derby' scheme, under which men were asked to attest voluntarily their willingness to serve; it proved inadequate. He became Under-Secretary of State at the War Office when Lord Kitchener died, and was appointed Secretary of State for War in Lloyd George's new administration.

(Frances) Hermia DURHAM (1873 - 1948). Civil Servant who was very involved in women's employment during the First World War. Her father was a surgeon; she was educated at Notting Hill High School, and studied history at Girton College, Cambridge. Between 1900 - 1907 was hon. sec. of Registry and Apprenticeship Committee of the Women's University Settlement in Southwark; 1907 - 1915 worked as organiser and inspector of technical classes for women under London County Council; developed trade schools for girls; played important part in reconstructing evening institutions. Because of her experience in technical training/job placement, in 1915 she was asked by Board of Trade to head its Women's Department. She was chief woman inspector of the Employment Department of the Board of Trade (which became the Ministry of Labour), as such, was concerned with recruitment of women for wide range of activities. Awarded CBE in 1918. At the end of the war was appointed head of Women's Training Dept. of Ministry of Labour; this department was dissolved amid controversy. In 1923 she was appointed assistant secretary, in charge of Juvenile Employment Section (the first woman in Civil Service to obtain the post). She retired to Devon in 1933.

Dr Letitia FAIRFIELD CBE (1885 - 1978). Appointed WRAF Inspector of Medical Services. Like Mrs Chalmers Watson, Dr Fairfield received her medical education in Edinburgh. She was the sister of Rebecca West, the writer. Was the first woman to become a London County Council Senior Medical Officer. She joined the LCC service in 1911. In 1920 she was sent on a mission to the West Indies; in 1938 went to Malta, to advise on how to deal with venereal disease in women.

Mrs Millicent Garrett FAWCETT (1847 - 1929). Leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, [NUWSS] the 'constitutional suffrage movement'. One of a large family - her father, Newson Garrett, was a wealthy corn and coal merchant in Suffolk - her sister was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. In 1867 she married Henry Fawcett, a blind Cambridge professor and Liberal MP; they had one daughter. She was left a widow at 37. She played a crucial part in the suffrage movement, in 1890 taking over as leader of NUWSS, a position she retained until 1919, when she renounced her membership of the NUWSS (which was renamed the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship) when, encouraged by Eleanor Rathbone, support of family allowances became part of its policy. Retired from political work in 1919, though she continued to work for sex equality. She lived in Gower Street, two or three doors away from Violet Markham. 'At heart..she always remained a Liberal'; she persistently opposed protective legislation for women workers.

Dame Katharine FURSE (1875 - 1952). Appointed head of the Women's Royal Naval Service, in 1917. The daughter of historian, John Addington Symonds, she lived abroad when young in Switzerland and Italy. Married Charles Wellington Furse, the painter, in 1900; he died four years later, leaving her on her own with two sons. She is apparently the model for *Diana of the Uplands*, in the Tate Gallery, London. Furse travelled a lot; joined the VAD before the First World War, and was appointed its head in 1916. She formed the WRENS Association in 1920, and remained president until 1952. During the interwar years she worked for Sir Arnold Lunn, running mountain holidays; she was also very involved with Girl Guide movement, and represented Girl Guides and Scouts at the League of Nations.

Sir AUCKLAND CAMPBELL GEDDES (1879 - 1954). Son of Auckland Campbell Geddes, a Scotsman who was engaged in railway construction in India for 40 years. His elder brother was Sir Eric Geddes, who was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in 1918; his sister, was Mrs Chalmers Watson, first woman medical graduate at Edinburgh University, and first Chief Controller of WAAC. Auckland Geddes joined the Army during the South African War; returned and graduated in medicine, and then took up teaching. Was a Professor of Anatomy; in 1914 was teaching at McGill University in Montreal, but at the outbreak of war he joined The Northumberland Fusiliers, serving in England and France. In 1916 he was appointed Director of Recruiting at the War Office; in 1918 became Minister of National Service. He later served as President of the Local Government Board, Minister of Reconstruction, and President of the Board of Trade. In 1920 he was sent to Washington as British Ambassador. At the end of his time there he returned to a business career. Was troubled by poor sight and lost his sight in one eye. Became the first Lord Geddes of Rolvenden.

Sir Eric GEDDES. Elder brother of Sir Auckland Campbell Geddes and Mona Chalmers Watson; appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in 1917. Was Chairman of the Committee on National Expenditure in 1921 - 22; its report became known as the Geddes 'Axe'.

Dame Helen GWYNNE-VAUGHAN [Helen FRASER] (1879 - 1967). Appointed Chief Controller of WAAC in France in February 1917, and replaced Violet Douglas-Pennant as Commandant of the WRAF in September 1918. She was appointed Director of the ATS in the Second World War, but had to relinquish her appointment in 1941. A botanist; educated at Cheltenham Ladies College and King's College, London, where she obtained a BSc in Botany in 1904, followed by a D.Sc. by the time she was 28. Interested in cytology of the sex cycle in fungi; she became head of the Botany Department at Birkbeck in 1909. In 1911 she married a palaeobotanist, Professor T.G. Gwynne-Vaughan, who died in 1915. Has been described as 'terse, mannish, abrupt, but got results'; her biographer, Molly Izzard, describes her as 'a woman pugnacious by nature, accustomed to hold her own, and more than her own, with men'; with a certain 'bold slanginess'; she smoked, argued, swore, etc. Izzard claims that men attributed her attitude to 'militant feminism', and they 'disliked it, resented it or laughed at it according to their own natures'. Her cousin, Bernard Fergusson (ex Governor General of New Zealand) found her 'witty, entertaining, slightly witch-like, formidable, and with an incredibly long memory'. According to Betty Harvie Anderson, MP, 'the one thing she is not is a

feminist, for despite hanging her skirts by braces, she could not be mistaken for one of those pseudo-masculine women'. (Betty Anderson to Alan Maclean, 10 March, 1966, Papers of Helen Gwynne Vaughan, WRAC MUSEUM, Guildford.

Hon. Evelina HAVERFIELD (1867 - 1920). Founder member of the Women's Emergency Corps at the outbreak of the First World War, and a militant suffragette. Daughter of the Second Lord Abinger, in 1887 she married Major Henry Wykeham Brooke Tunstall Haverfield; married, secondly, (in 1895 or 1899) Major Balgy; later she resumed the name of Haverfield. One of her sisters was Dr Ella Scarlett SYNGE, a medical officer in Serbia during the First World War, who created a scandal by writing a report praising the conditions under which prisoners of war lived in Germany. Evelina was brought up at Inverlochy Castle, in Invernessshire. During the Boer War she formed a remount camp for horses left to die. She was a member of the East London Federation of the Suffragettes (later known as the Workers and Suffrage Federation), and Treasurer for the WSF. After founding the WEC, and also working with the WVR, in 1915 she went to Serbia with the Scottish Women's Hospitals; in 1917 she went to Russia. Described variously as 'impulsive, humane and very warm-hearted'; 'generous to a fault'; 'We all fell under the spell of her charm and radiant smile, and admired her beautiful face...and slim figure'. Sylvia Pankhurst claimed that when she first joined the suffragette movement Evelina had a 'cold and proud' expression, 'one felt that bitterness rather than love, was the impelling motive of her militancy'. Pankhurst was repelled when Evelina Haverfield told her she had felt no affection for her children'. Haverfield stayed on in Serbia after the war, opening a hospital for tubercular and orphaned children at a spa; in March 1920 she died there of double-pneumonia.

John HODGE, MP (1855 - 1937) A Labour MP who served on the national committee of the Labour Party from 1900 - 1915; an original member of the parliamentary labour party, holding the seat for Gorton from 1906 - 1923. During the First World War Hodge was the first Minister of Labour (1916 - 1917) and Minister of Pensions (1917 - 1919).

Winifred HOLTBY (1898 - 1935). Writer and journalist. Born at Rudston, Yorkshire; educated at Queen Margaret's School, Scarborough, and Somerville College, Oxford. Served in QMAAC in France in 1918 - 1919, as hostel forewoman. Lectured in South Africa in 1926; became very concerned with political and social conditions there. Was a 'leading figure in the feminist movement'; supported Viscountess Rhondda's Six Point Group. In 1926 became director of *Time and Tide*, for which she wrote regularly. Published various novels and short stories, as well as other books. A close friend of Vera Brittain.

Lt. Col. J. LEIGH WOOD. Officer put in charge of AGXI when it was first set up. Described by Gwynne-Vaughan's biographer as 'a staff officer with a professional and pragmatic attitude to the policy which he had been ordered to implement. He saw no necessity to commit himself emotionally to the new concept, nor perhaps did he welcome any overlapping of service and social life'. He was not very popular with some of the women of the WAAC.

Lady Edith LONDONDERRY [Lady Edith CASTLEREAGH] Also known as the Marchioness of Londonderry (1879 - 1959). Founded the **Women's Legion** during the First World War. She was the daughter of Sir Henry Chaplin, the First Viscount Chaplin, and grand-daughter of the Duke of Sutherland. In 1899 she married Charles Stewart Henry, the 7th Marquess of Londonderry. She lived, when in London, in Londonderry House, Park Lane. To quote H. Montgomery Hyde, Londonderry House was: 'the scene of many sumptuous political and social gatherings for upwards of a century and a half...Of all the wives who had entertained for their Marquess' in this setting of social prominence on the London scene, Edith was 'the most brilliant as well as the most beautiful'; indeed, she was 'one of the most strikingly beautiful women of her generation'. (H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Londonderry's: a Family Portrait* (1979), pp. xvii and 131.)

Mary Reid MACARTHUR (1880 - 1921). Trade union organiser. Her father owned a Glasgow draper business. In 1903 she became secretary to the Women's Trade Union League, and from then on, throughout her life, she worked for the cause of women's trades unionism. In 1906 she founded the **National Federation of Women Workers**; in 1907 launched *Woman Worker*. Stood unsuccessfully as a labour candidate at the end of the First World War. After two unsuccessful operations, she died of cancer at the beginning of 1921. 'In some respects she was suspicious of the feminism of her day'. She worked well with both men and women; she believed in 'sex co-operation rather than sex antagonism'; and 'strongly supported protective legislation for women, which she saw as complementary to her desire to involve women actively in the trade union movement'.

Gen. Rt. Hon. Sir (Cecil Frederick) Nevil MACREADY (1862 - 1946). Adjutant General, BEF 1914 - 16; Adjutant General to the Forces, 1916 - 18. As Adjutant General, the WAAC was under his charge. He joined the Gordon Highlanders in 1881; had been Adjutant in 1896 when Helen Fraser (Gwynne-Vaughan) had 'come out' at a ball in Aberdeen. Was in Egypt and South Africa. Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police 1918 - 20; GOC the Forces in Ireland, 1920 - 22. Retired in 1923, and was created Baronet.

Violet MARKHAM (1872 - 1959). Public Service administrator and writer; appointed Deputy Director of Women's Section, National Service Department, in 1917. Younger daughter of Charles Markham of Tipton House, Chesterfield, part owner of Markham Collieries; on her mother's side, the grand-daughter of Sir Joseph Paxton, designer of 1851 Exhibition, and Crystal Palace. Her only schooling was at a small establishment in West Heath. As a girl acquired an interest and knowledge of industry. An ardent anti-suffrage supporter until 1912; (she changed her mind completely during the war). At outbreak of war in 1914, through the influence of Sir Robert Morant, she was appointed to the executive committee of the National Relief (Prince of Wales's) Fund, and was also a long-term member of the Central Committee of Women's Training and Employment. In 1915 she married Lt. Col. James Carruthers; they had no children. Belonged to the Liberal party; stood as an Independent Liberal in Nottingham in 1918, but was soundly defeated; never stood again; was Mayor of Chesterfield for a time. In 1937 was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Assistance Board; 'one of the most important administrative posts held by a woman'. Worked on

innumerable committees throughout her life, sometimes as chairwoman. An energetic, cultured woman, with strong religious beliefs, and an 'honesty of purpose, a strict sense of duty and the widest charity towards others'.

Catherine MARSHALL. Suffragist and pacifist; up until 1915 she was Parliamentary Secretary of the NUWSS. Her mother was also an active suffragist. Had contacts with politicians such as Lloyd George and Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary. Vigorously opposed the war.

Dame Christabel PANKHURST (1880 - 1958). Suffragette and co-founder of the Women's Social and Political Union; the eldest daughter of Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst. Studied law at Victoria University Manchester; was refused admission to Lincoln's Inn. In 1918 she stood for parliament for the Women's Party; failed to be elected; was created DBE in 1936.

Mrs Emmeline PANKHURST (1858 - 1928). Suffragette and political reformer; born in Manchester, the daughter of a manufacturer; educated in France; married in 1879. Her husband died in 1898; she became a salaried Registrar of Births, Marriages, and Deaths. Took up political work; in 1903, with her daughters Christabel and Sylvia, she founded in Manchester the Women's Social and Political Union, and moved to London in 1907.

Sylvia PANKHURST (1882 - 1960). Suffragette and socialist; daughter of Emmeline and Richard PANKHURST. Was involved with the WSPU, but from 1912 worked at building 'a democratic mass movement' in the East End; this was first called the East London Federation of the WSPU; its name was changed to East London Federation of the Suffragettes. Sylvia spent 1914 - 18 on war relief work with the East London Federation; they established welfare clinics, a toy and garment factory for unemployed women workers, nurseries, etc., and organised League of Rights for Soldiers' and Sailors' Wives and relatives, to fight for better pensions etc. Sylvia was a pacifist, and supported the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She spent the last part of her life fighting against fascism and for Ethiopian independence.

Edith PRATT. Deputy Commandant of the WRAF. An Exhibitioner of Girton College, Cambridge, 1905 and 1909; BA Hons. London, 1908. She had been Staff Inspector of National Filling Factories for the first 18 months of the Ministry of Munitions' existence (from August 1915 - March 1917). Between March 1917 and 1918 she was Deputy Chief Controller in France for the WAAC; she then joined the WRAF, but resigned on 1 July, 1918, during Violet Douglas-Pennant's brief tenure as Commandant.

Eleanor RATHBONE (1872 - 1946). Suffragist. Daughter of William Rathbone (a wealthy merchant and shipowner, who became an MP in 1869) she initiated the campaign for family allowances during the First World War; she regarded family allowances as a way to end economic dependence of women on their husbands. Studied philosophy at Somerville College, Oxford, 1893 - 1896; in 1909 was elected the first woman member of the Liverpool City council. Did a lot of social research; became parliamentary secretary to the Liverpool Women's Suffrage Society. Remained always within NUWSS, and supported

Millicent Fawcett. In 1919 she became president of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (new name of NUWSS) which she held until 1928. In 1929 became MP (was returned as Independent Member for the Combined British Universities). 'Eleanor Rathbone was one of the most significant of the post-war generation of feminists since she tried...to develop a feminist ideology which went beyond equal rights to explore some of the problems associated with women's own particular needs, especially as mothers'.

Viscountess RHONDDA, Margaret Haig THOMAS (also known as Lady Mackworth) (1883 - 1958). A member of the WSPU, in 1918 she was appointed head of the Women's Section, Ministry of National Service. The only daughter of David Thomas and Sybil Haig, both of whom were supporters of women's suffrage; her grandfather had made his fortune from coal in Wales. Spent a brief period at Somerville, Oxford; in 1908 married Humphrey Mackworth (who became the 7th baronet of Caerleon). Her father encouraged her to be independent; she became very involved in his business, and for a period, she worked full-time as his paid assistant. In 1915 her father was involved with organising munitions from the US; he became Minister of Food, and introduced rationing. Lady Rhondda was a passenger on the *Lusitania* in May 1915, when it was torpedoed, and 1,000 passengers lost their lives. In 1918 her father was made a viscount - with the provision that his daughter succeeded to the title; Margaret became Viscountess Rhondda. During the war her marriage ended; they had no children. She inherited her father's business when he died in 1918, but continued to work for women. In 1923 she founded the Six Point Group; concerned with legislative action to remedy remaining inequalities (eg equal pay and opportunities). In 1920 she founded *Time and Tide*, which during the 1920s was 'a highly important centre of feminist thinking'; its regular contributors included Winifred Holtby, Cecily Hamilton and Vera Brittain.

Maude ROYDEN (1876 - 1956). A suffragist and preacher. Daughter of Sir Thomas Bland Royden, a ship owner. Studied modern history at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and obtained a degree in 1899. Spent three years at the Victoria Women's Settlement in Liverpool; in 1909 met the Rev. George Hudson Shaw, who invited her to act as unpaid curate in his parish. They fell in love, but Shaw was already married; and his wife, who suffered from severe mental illness, was completely dependent upon him. Maude Royden and Shaw remained very close companions, and she often shared their house; they finally married in 1944; he died 2 months after the marriage. In 1908 she joined the NUWSS; was editor of *The Common Cause* between 1912 - 1914. Royden's 'most important contribution' to the women's movement has been described as 'her stand beside Eleanor Rathbone in the demand for a new approach to feminism which emphasised the ways in which women differed from men'; she supported Rathbone's scheme for family allowances, and was a member of the committee in 1917 which first began to study the matter. Like Rathbone, she attached considerable importance to motherhood. In 1917 she became an assistant preacher at the non-conformist City Temple; she toured the world as a preacher until 1936. In 1936 she resigned to work for world peace, though she renounced her pacifism during the Second World War.

Sir David SHACKLETON (1863 - 1938). A cotton operator until he was 29; he became a Labour MP (Clitheroe Division, Lancashire) from 1902 - 10. He was a National Health Insurance Commissioner from 1911 - 1916, and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour, 1916 - 1919.

Dame Florence SIMPSON [See Mrs Burleigh Leach].

Frances STEVENSON. Secretary to Lloyd George during the First World War; many years later became his second wife.

Philippa (Pippa) STRACHEY (1872 - 1968). A suffragist, who ran the **Women's Service Bureau**, during the First World War. One of ten children, one of whose brother was **Lytton Strachey**. Her mother was a friend of **Millicent Fawcett**, and active in the Suffrage movement; Pippa joined the NUWSS, and became its full-time secretary. She tended to remain in the background, but was 'a brilliant organiser...the genius behind the NUWWS processions'. Her sister-in-law was **Ray Strachey** [author of *The Cause*, one of the earliest sources of the history of the women's movement in Britain]; Ray and Pippa became close friends in their youth. In 1911 Ray met and married **Oliver Strachey**, another of Pippa's brothers, who had been in India. [Oliver was 'something of a rolling stone' for years, but in 1914 he began to work in the War Office, in the codes and cypher department, and discovered he had a real talent for the work and continued to engage in it until the Second World War]. Pippa and Ray worked together during the First World War, particularly concerned to safeguard women's interests at work; they set up the **Women's Service Bureau**, to help place women in jobs previously held by men. **Katharine Furse** knew and liked Ray Strachey: 'I am very fond of her and she has big ideas'. (Furse to Markham, 4 September, 1918, LSE Markham 4/16). At this time, Ray Strachey was apparently 'anxious about the [women's services]'. After the war the **Women's Service Bureau** became the **London Society for Women's Service**. A **Women's Service Library**, and a **Women's Service House** were established; in 1953 the society was renamed the **Fawcett Society** after **Millicent Fawcett**. Pippa never married; she was devoted to her family, nursing both her mother and **Lytton**. 'Charming, able and unselfish', she lived to be 96.

Lucy Anne Evelyne Deane STREATFEILD. Was one of the first woman senior inspectors of factories. Chairwoman of the group of women who went to France in March 1918, to investigate rumours against the **WAAC**.

Mrs May (Margaret) TENNANT (1868 - 1946). Civil Servant. Appointed **Director of Women's Section, National Service Department**, in 1917. Born **Margaret ABRAHAM**, in County Dublin; educated at home; when her father died in 1887 and left the family badly off, she went to London to try and make a living. **Lady Dilke** employed her as a secretary; later she became **treasurer of the Women's Trade Union League**. Had many contacts with Liberal and labour activists. In 1891 was appointed one of four women assistant commissioners on the **Royal Commission on Labour**. In 1893 **Asquith** appointed her the first woman factory inspector, and in 1895 she became superintendent of the women's Branch of the **Factory Department**. In 1896 she wrote a summary of factory legislation; the same year she married **H.J. Tennant**, **Asquith's** parliamentary secretary and brother-in-law, and had five children. Continued to work; was founder member of the **Central**

Committee for Women's Employment, and its treasurer from 1914 until 1939. Worked as welfare adviser at the War Office during the First World War, until in 1917 she was appointed Director of Women's Department, National Service Department. When that department was dismantled, she moved to the Ministry of Munitions. 'Shrewd, caring, hard-working, humorous'.

Julia VARLEY (1871 - 1952). Social reformer and trade unionist. The daughter of a Bradford mill-worker, she began to work in a textile mill at ten. Campaigned for women's suffrage with her sister in Bradford; a union organiser in the Black Country. In 1907 she successfully organised the chain-makers of Cradley Heath into the NFWW; and in 1909 was invited by Edward Cadbury to Birmingham, where she was employed as secretary by the Birmingham Committee for the Organisation of Women; sat on the Trades Council, and was a member of its Executive Committee. After 1912 she left the NFWW and Birmingham, and became the first women's organiser in Birmingham for the Workers' Union. Was a member of the 'commission' which visited the WAAC in France in 1918.

Dame Katherine (Jane TREFUSIS) WATSON-WATT (1899 - 1971). Director of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in 1939. Born in Chile, where her father was an engineer; during the First World War served in the Women's Volunteer Reserve from 1916 - 1919; owned and ran kennels from 1922 to 1938. Was one of the founders of Emergency Service; became Chief Instructor to the ATS, and moved to the RAF. In June 1939 she was appointed the first Director of the WAAF; promoted to Air Chief Commandant in 1943; retired from WAAF, and became DBE in 1944.

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3. Parliamentary Papers
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Jennifer M. Gould: PhD 1988 [The Women's Corps]

ERRATA

Page No.

- 45 Footnote 57 should be renumbered '59'.
- 53 Footnote 66 should read ACI 441 of 26 Feb. 1916 [not ACI44].
- 83 Bottom of pg; add 'credit' to end of last line on page - ie 'to give credit....
- 126 Footnote 40; 6th line - spelling error - 'economy'.
- 129 Footnote 77 - should read 'See Ch. 10, pp. 301-2. Also Chapter 9, p. 266.
- 156 Mid page, after FN99: 'to alter completing' should read 'to alter completely'.
- 170 Last sentence of 1st para. should read 'John Hodge'.
- 195 First line of first complete para - spelling error - should read 'Lady Rhondda'.
- 241 Last line of footnote 13 should read ' Lady Mackworth'.
- 244. Insert '7' in footnote 57.
- 293 Second line down; should read 'W.C. Bersey, Head of M3, under the Director of Manning'.
- 293 Last line on page should read 'WAAC' not 'QMAAC'. [Name altered after this date].
- 313 Indented para.; 3rd line, should read 'with you as head of M.3', not 'M2'.
- 325 Remove footnote number 148 on pg. 325.
- 355 2nd line of last para: insert 'were'; ie '-and if they were to be required'.
- 370 First line of first complete para.; date should be '9 September 1938', not 1939 [i.e. ATS formally authorised by Royal Warrant on 9 Sept. 1938].
- 379 First word of third line should be 'In', not 'Inn'.
- 398 Footnote 140; add to reference -'War Cabinet 33(41), Conclusions of War Cabinet, 31 March 1941'.